THE EMPEROR'S FRIEND

Marshal Jean Lannes

Margaret Scott Chrisawn

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Acknowledgments

No one ever writes a book by herself. At a minimum, every author has a cheering section. She has long-suffering family members who put up with the hours of writing and trying to meet yet another deadline at the expense of postponing familial responsibilities—again. She has friends who seem amazed and pleased she's actually going to be published and that they know her—until they find out her book is nonfiction on an obscure subject and she's *not* going to be one of the pop fiction megastars who will take them all out for expensive dinners paid for with the royalties.

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My husband, Michael, deserves a medal. He spent a month in France with me on our wedding trip and never complained about endless hours at exclusively Napoleonic sites, nor pointed out the fact that most of the people I was interested in had been dead for a really long time. He didn't complain, either, when I went off for a three-month research trip, leaving him to keep hearth and home intact.

I owe my closest friend, Jill Shicluna, for her unending moral support and her clever decision to move to France, within spitting distance of Marshal Lannes's hometown. She's become quite a minor celebrity there, the single-minded English

expatriate, pestering the locals for those gossipy tidbits that make a biography interesting. She and I are also veterans of some fascinating road trips to every notable and bewilderingly obscure place associated with the marshal. Finally, I owe Paul Atwood of London, who, with his wife Dawn, offered me their hospitality and friendship beyond the expected. On one memorable occasion Paul and I spent hours in a London archive trying to see which one of us could actually decipher Dr. Dominique Larrey's handwriting. Paul is a true believer—he named his oldest son, who is also my godson, Jean-Paul, evidently not minding the grief this boy will encounter from his East London schoolmates.

I owe equal gratitude to my academic colleagues of the Institute on Napoleon and the French Revolution at Florida State University. Unique among scholarly associations, the members shared a close camaraderie and provided an excellent though often heated sounding board for my ideas, both academic and arcane. Throughout it all, Dr. Donald D. Horward was the real inspiration, and I thank him for accepting me, a somewhat elderly and opinionated female, as one of his graduate students. He taught me rigorous research skills, the art of critical analysis, and the ability to see two sides, and sometimes three, of each issue. He also made a valiant effort, generally successful, to eradicate all traces of purple prose from my dissertation. The fact that I put it all back in this book, and then some, it not his fault.

All this having been said, I can only hope you will enjoy this book half as much fun as I and my fellow travelers have had during the long process of putting it together.

Introduction: D'Artagnan's Successor, 1769–1792

> Just as Don Quixote mistook windmills for giants and flocks of sheep for armies, d'Artagnan regarded each smile an insult and every look a provocation.
>
> —Alexandre Dumas, *Les Trois Mousquetaires*

The ancient French province of Gascony is famous for Armagnac, a brandy stronger and less subtle than the more renowned cognac; for a turbulent history due, in part, to continually shifting political loyalties and strong cultural identity; and for a tendency to produce fiercely proud, volatile, and frequently unconventional military heroes. An example of the latter is Charles de Batz de Castelmorre, immortalized by Alexandre Dumas as d'Artagnan. The seventeenth-century Gascon hero has a flamboyant statue commemorating his swashbuckling personality at the top of the *Escalière monumentale* in Auch, the capital of the present *département du Gers*.

Twenty-six miles north of Auch is the Gallo-Roman town of Lectoure, former see of bishops and *ci-devant* home to the rowdy counts of Armagnac. Although Louis XI's soldiers assassinated the last count in 1473 and the French Revolution dispensed with the bishops, the town produced another Gascon hero. In the 1830s, municipal officials erected a classical white marble statue, *not* flamboyant, under huge chestnut trees at the eastern end of the town common. The fortunate son thus commemorated never received fictional immortality, and no contemporary wrote an account of his life and career. The young boy's family and friends never thought he would be famous—they just hoped he would manage to stay out of trouble. Details of his adolescence remained unrecorded until after his extraordinary and quixotic successes, when local legends proliferated.

Jean Lannes was born on 10 April 1769, the same year as his future commander-in-chief and emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte. His family was of decidedly humble origin, but worked its way, generation by generation, up the social

and economic ladder from peasant farmers to the edge of the petite bourgeoisie. Jean's great-grandfather, Pierre, born in 1641, lived in the rural hamlet of Ayraud, three miles from Lectoure, and farmed land surrounding the Château de Barrast owned by the perennially absent comtes de Chastenet de Puységur. Henri Sales, a descendant of Jean's younger sister, Jeanne Belliard, pointed out that "a great many erroneous—not to say positively ridiculous—things have been written about the family's origins" and its place in society. General Thoumas, author of an uncritical 1891 biography, claimed the family came from the Gironde, while the third duc de Montebello, Jean's grandson, boasted they "had always been venerated in Lectoure." Dirt-poor farmers and struggling merchants do not usually attract attention or admiration from townspeople, particularly when social distinctions were rigidly observed.[1]

Tired—and broke—from farming, Jean Lannes *père* moved to Lectoure in 1759, married Cécile Fouraignan, and used his wife's modest dowry to purchase a townhouse. The last residence at the bottom of the steep rue Matabiau and overlooking the austere northern bastions, the two-story stone house was uncomfortably close to a tannery and abattoir. Père Jeannet ignored the drawbacks and began to earn a living, such as it was, as a merchant, the occupation he claimed on Jean's baptismal certificate of 11 April 1769. Père Jeannet and his wife had eight children, five boys and three girls, the same as a more illustrious but equally poor couple, Carlo and Letizia Bonaparte. Jean was the fifth child, his Christian name reflecting the bizarre family habit of naming the majority of its male children either Bernard or Jean—sons, brothers, and cousins—with numbers to keep them straight. Therefore, this particular boy became Jean V.[2]

The house and the family's finances were stretched to the limit. To provide necessities, Père Jeannet sold most of his rural property between 1778 and 1787, but kept his vineyards. These necessities did not include formal education for the boys. However, by a combination of intelligence and luck, the oldest son, Bernard, became the protégé of the canon of Saint-Gervais. The cleric convinced Monseigneur de Cugnac, vicar to the bishop of Lectoure, to admit Bernard to the seminary in Auch without the usual fees.[3] Bernard shared his studies with Jean during his frequent visits home. The haphazard tutoring sessions covered the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic; writing presented a challenge because French was not Jean's first language. His grammar and spelling never improved much with time or practice, remaining a frustrating mix of Gascon French and pure invention. He did not grasp arithmetic either, or at least the association between numbers and their corresponding monetary value. Bernard did not bother with theology, philosophy, and literature—he knew the limits of his patience and Jean's attention span.

The only mention of additional schooling comes from an undated pamphlet in the municipal archives in Agen, written after Jean's death. The anonymous author claimed Jean attended the *collège* in Lectoure until the beginning of the French Revolution, when political events and economic reversals forced him to drop out. Jean was twenty in 1789, too old for a *collège*, the equivalent of an American high school. Given the family's chancy finances, he and his other brothers were by then apprenticed to a trade, working, or in the army.[4]

Nobody cared about a teenaged boy from the lower end of the socioeconomic scale in the late eighteenth century. Everybody "who knew him when" suddenly cared a great deal when he rocketed from obscurity to fame. Most townspeople never expected Jean to amount to anything—though he had charm and youthful insouciance, he frequently skated close to the edge of juvenile delinquency, cheerfully accompanied by his younger brother Bernard, nicknamed Louiset. A contemporary claimed the youthful pranks did not disappear beneath the weight of rank and status, and under the fine uniform with sparkling decorations lurked a grubby adolescent determined to have fun, one way or the other. Gustave de Boubée remembered when Jean returned to Lectoure for his sister's wedding in December 1797, wearing his best uniform and flaunting his new status as *général de brigade.* Evidently, the welcoming committee failed to provide enough amusements, and he spent one boring afternoon tossing rocks over the bastion walls into the garden of an elderly woman. She was not impressed. "I know who you are, in spite of that fine uniform! You little twerp—you're *still* demolishing my cabbages! I can't see you've improved much."[5]

Though Jean eventually reformed, more or less, Louiset never did. He joined a hussar regiment, thinking it might be easier than actually working, but could not accept military discipline. Bailing him out of countless escapades, Jean secured Louiset's "resignation," married him off to a respectable young woman who did not ask too many questions, and gave them some property in nearby Vaucluse. Unrepentant to the end of his indolent life, Louiset took to drinking at the Café Camoreyt, with a friend to walk him home when alcohol got the best of reason and sense of direction. He staggered past the statue of his illustrious brother each time, swearing that one day Jean would jump down from his pedestal and berate him for his deplorable conduct.[6]

By the time he was seventeen, Jean was apprenticed to M. Dulau, a dyer in Auch. No one knows how long he worked or why and when he left. Locals preferred the story that he joined the army, fought a duel with an officer—not surprising to those who knew him—came home to resume his apprenticeship, but was persuaded to join the volunteers of 1792 instead. A lady claimed that her great-grandfather, Victor de Mondran, chevalier de Saint-Louis and captain of the Hainault regiment, had adopted Jean as an orderly, *comme ordonnance,* in her words, shortly after the Revolution began. No records exist for this regiment to confirm the possibility. A merchant from Lectoure, *maître* Guilhon, said Jean returned from the army, in disgrace or otherwise, and told him he was resuming his apprenticeship. The merchant thought he was crazy. "What's gotten into you? Dyers can't even afford drinking water—I'm a cloth merchant and I know. Go back to the army—with luck you might become a captain." Seeing how well Jean turned out and proud of his excellent advice, he told *général de division* Lannes, "Admit I was right—without my advice you'd never have amounted to a thing."[7]

The National Assembly issued decrees in the spring of 1791 for 100,000 auxiliaries to enlist in various regiments. Several of Jean's friends, including Pierre Banel, Jacques-Gervais Subervie, and Joseph Lagrange, joined the Vivarais regiment. These three young men came from families whose economic and social

standing was better than Jean's and they did not need to work. Other less well-off young men joined the national guard in nearby Castlenau d'Abrieu, among whom were two Jeans and a Bernard. It is probable that the future marshal was one of these, because Castlenau d'Abrieu was near his father's vineyards where he was working; guardsmen could remain at home until they were called up.[8]

The département du Gers and its communes received orders on 6 May 1792 to organize volunteer battalions and send lists of elected officers to district directors in Auch. Lectoure officials carried out this decree on 20 June. According to official requirements, only former officers and noncommissioned officers with service in the royal army could be elected. Officers chosen for the 2nd Battalion, however, owed their election as much to social status as to any prior military service. Jean met neither the official requirement nor the social one, but his comrades did not seem to care—they elected him second lieutenant of grenadiers.[9]

Military authorities had originally designated the 2nd Battalion's 800 men for the Armée du Midi, but changed their minds in favors of the Pyrenees. While the volunteers waited in Auch for their orders, they tried to master basic military drill; wondered if arms, uniforms, and boots would ever arrive; and spent their leisure singing patriotic songs. District representatives addressed the wide gulf between patriotism and military realities in a letter to the minister of war in Paris. "It is essential for the maintenance of order and discipline that the necessary equipment be provided at once," they wrote. "Soldiers cannot learn drills nor officers the art of command in a single day, and a minute lost is irretrievable. It is easy to imagine that [our] citizens might lose confidence in a battalion without arms, poorly dressed, wearing their work clothes." Gascony was a long way from Paris. Military officials in the capital were more concerned about the northeastern frontier than a backwater theater of operations, and diverted supplies for the volunteer battalions in the south to the Armée du Nord. Local officials complained, asking how they could defend the southern frontiers with men who had nothing. No one bothered to respond.[10]

The volunteers of the 2nd Battalion left for Perpignan in late July, wearing whatever they had and with no assurances of proper arms. Most did not care—they had volunteered out of patriotism and a sense of adventure. On the march, it became apparent that only the most capable or determined volunteers ignored the privations and developed their own interpretation of military conduct. They stopped at the large Miral camp near Toulouse for additional training and the supplies that would supposedly transform them from a horde of near-derelicts into a recognizable fighting force. His officer status notwithstanding, Jean needed training and a decent turnout as much as anybody, and he made the most of his opportunities at Miral. To a surprising extent, he succeeded.

NOTES

1. Henri Sales, "Les origines du maréchal Lannes, d'après des documents inédits," *Publication du bi-centenaire de la naissance du maréchal Lannes* (Auch, 1969), 23; Général Charles-Antoine Thoumas, *Le maréchal Lannes* (Paris, 1891), 1; Charles

Lannes, *Le maréchal Lannes* (Tours, 1900), 1.

2. Sales, "Les origines," 25. The occupations of Lannes's great-grandfather and grandfather were listed as *laboureur* or *métayer*, probably analogous to a tenant or peasant farmer. His father was a *trafiquer*, the designation appearing in the parish record, and means a merchant. According to Sales, Père Jeannet was considered *un petit bourgeois d'origine terrienne*, in terms of the locale and the times. For a copy of the baptismal record, see Archives municipales de Lectoure, Registre paroissial de Saint-Gervais, AM GG 7, N°. 948. Two of the eight children, both girls, apparently did not survive infancy. This led to the erroneous contention by both Charles Lannes and Thoumas that there were only six children. The third duc de Montebello compounded the error by stating that Jean was the second oldest child, thereby reversing the order of two older brothers who, as he claimed, "died gloriously in the *Armée des Pyrénées-Orientales*." One might expect a direct descendant to get his family history right. Lannes, *Maréchal Lannes*, 11.

3. Sales, "Les origines," 26; Georges Courtès, *La fortune du maréchal Lannes* (Auch 1980), 8.

4. Sales, "Les origines," 27.

5. Archives municipales d'Agen, Gustave de Boubée, *Mémoires inédits*, (n.d.), 53–54. Charles Lannes never mentioned Louiset, probably because this brother failed to add any luster to the family name. See Thoumas, *Maréchal Lannes*, 2–3; Sales, "Les origines," 27.

6. Sales, "Les Origines," 27.

7. The letter was written in June 1950 in response to an article written by Sales. Sales, "Les origines," 30. The important phrase in Guilhon's story is "Go back to the army." See Thoumas, *Lannes*, 5; Jean-Claude Damamme, *Lannes, maréchal d'Empire*, (Paris, 1986), 27.

8. Jacques Laterrade was elected lieutenant colonel of the 2nd Battalion. He had no prior military service, but he was a prominent provincial official. Joseph Lagrange was the mayor of Lectoure, and was chosen a grenadier captain. Jacques-Gervais Subervie, also elected a captain, was the son of the secretary to the municipal administration. Pierre Banel had served in the Vintimille regiment, and Jérôme Soulès was a sergeant with the Hainault infantry regiment, and both were elected adjutant-majors. See France, Archives de la guerre, Service historique de l'armée de la terre, Château de Vincennes, MSS (hereafter cited as Service historique), Volontaires nationaux: département du Gers, decree of 6 May 1792, Carton X^W 34; Archives départementales du Gers, *Levées de volontaires, 1791—an VI*, Série L 365; Archives municipales de Lectoure, *Régistre d'enrôlement des volontaires*, Annexes 1a, b, et c, AR-H-1 (W1).

9. Service historique, "Histoire du recruitement des armées dans le département du Gers," Carton X^W 34; André Laffargue, *Jean Lannes, maréchal de France* (Auch, 1975), 11. The rank of second lieutenant was confirmed on 20 June 1792, and was noted in Lannes's service record. Service historique, Dossier du maréchal Lannes, MF^2 10.

10. Service historique, "Histoire du recruitement des armées dans le département du Gers," Carton X^W 34.

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Chapter 1

The Dyer's Apprentice at War and in Love: L'Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, 1793–1795

The rough school of privations and bad luck
—Général Thoumas, *Le maréchal Lannes*

Miral was the staging point and training ground for the thousands of volunteers streaming in almost weekly. What they lacked in military skill they made up for with an idealistic patriotism, accepting shortages and spartan living conditions, at least at first. The 2nd Battalion's officers, including Second-Lieutenant Lannes, believed the Jacobin ideology that promised speedy promotions—if they managed to survive—based on talent and willingness to do whatever it took to protect the Republic from its enemies. The training officers adopted a more pragmatic philosophy, designed to transform these volunteers from every occupation and social class into disciplined, responsive, and effective soldiers in time to confront the enemy. After the first frustrating week, most drill instructors thought the enemy would be ready first.

General Jean-Antoine Marbot, in command of the camp, used an imposing residence donated by the nearby city of Toulouse for his headquarters. The previous owner, a Monsieur de Rességuier, had disapproved of the Revolution and expressed his opinion—and a certain degree of cowardice—by leaving his wife and son behind when he emigrated. General Marbot allowed them to live in rooms safely removed from revolutionaries, and then sent for his sons. The younger of the two, Marcellin was eleven when he reached the camp. He later recalled that his father particularly liked two officers among the dozens passing through, inviting them to parties and dinners. One was Adjutant-général Pierre-François Augereau, who arrived during the summer of 1793; his unconventional military career and imposing height fascinated Marcellin. The other was Lannes, whose ability to entertain him won Marcellin's affection. The "lively, gay, uneducated Gascon" would sneak upstairs

after dinner, his pockets stuffed with marzipan, and tell him army stories, doubtless embellished, appallingly frank, and totally unsuitable for an eleven-year-old. Marcellin loved it, even more when Jean let him play with his sword and pistols when the general could not see them.[1]

The officer who had the greatest influence, at least in Lannes's opinion, was Sergeant-Major Pierre-Charles Pouzet, a former noncommissioned officer in the Royal Champagne regiment. As drill instructor for the 2nd Battalion, Pouzet had little to work with. He did not care whether most of his students had uniforms, but he objected that poles were a poor substitute for muskets, scythes were not sabers, and throwing rocks at the enemy instead of shells did not strike him as much of a deterrent. The government's representatives-on-mission plagued him almost daily; they considered themselves experts on every aspect of military operations. Pouzet succeeded with the battalion because he had to, and ignored the aggravations he could not control. In the process, he noticed Lannes's single-minded determination to master every military detail as quickly as possible and the surprising ability to prove he had.[2]

It was just as well, because the government gave him the opportunity to show off whatever he had learned when France declared war against Spain on 7 March 1793. The National Convention created the Armée des Pyrénées at the end of April to defend the southern frontier, and then split it into two forces. The new Armée des Pyrénées-orientales consisted mostly of volunteers whose training was incomplete; weapons, uniforms, boots, and food reached it sporadically or not at all. The army would also suffer from a bewildering proliferation of commanders-in-chief replaced because of their military failures or the representatives' interference. From May 1793 through the army's dissolution in May 1795, it had ten commanders whose abilities varied as much as the lengths of their commands. The shortest term was six days, the longest eleven months.[3]

Lannes did not much care about the comings and goings of generals. He was too busy, like everyone else, with endless drills during dusty, hot fall days, then wet, freezing winter days. Regardless of season or weather, the volunteers gathered around campfires and sang revolutionary songs, convinced patriotic zeal would defeat Ancien régime indolence. Perhaps Lannes also thought one or two rousing verses of *Ça ira* or the *carmagnole* were as effective as muskets or artillery, both of which were unfortunately in very short supply.

The 2nd Battalion reached the sprawling, half-completed Camp de l'Union outside Perpignan at the beginning of March 1793. By April, the camp held 11,000 men, only 2,000 of who were regular troops, and an additional 10,000 garrisoned the town. They all would have starved without the often enforced generosity of the townspeople, because the commissariats had not planned for quite so many troops. Furthermore, high, rocky slopes covered with vines, olive groves, and thick scrub vegetation surrounded the camp. The entire area did not have a single level spot suitable for drilling, but at least the troops could hide behind the natural barriers if the enemy decided to attack.[4]

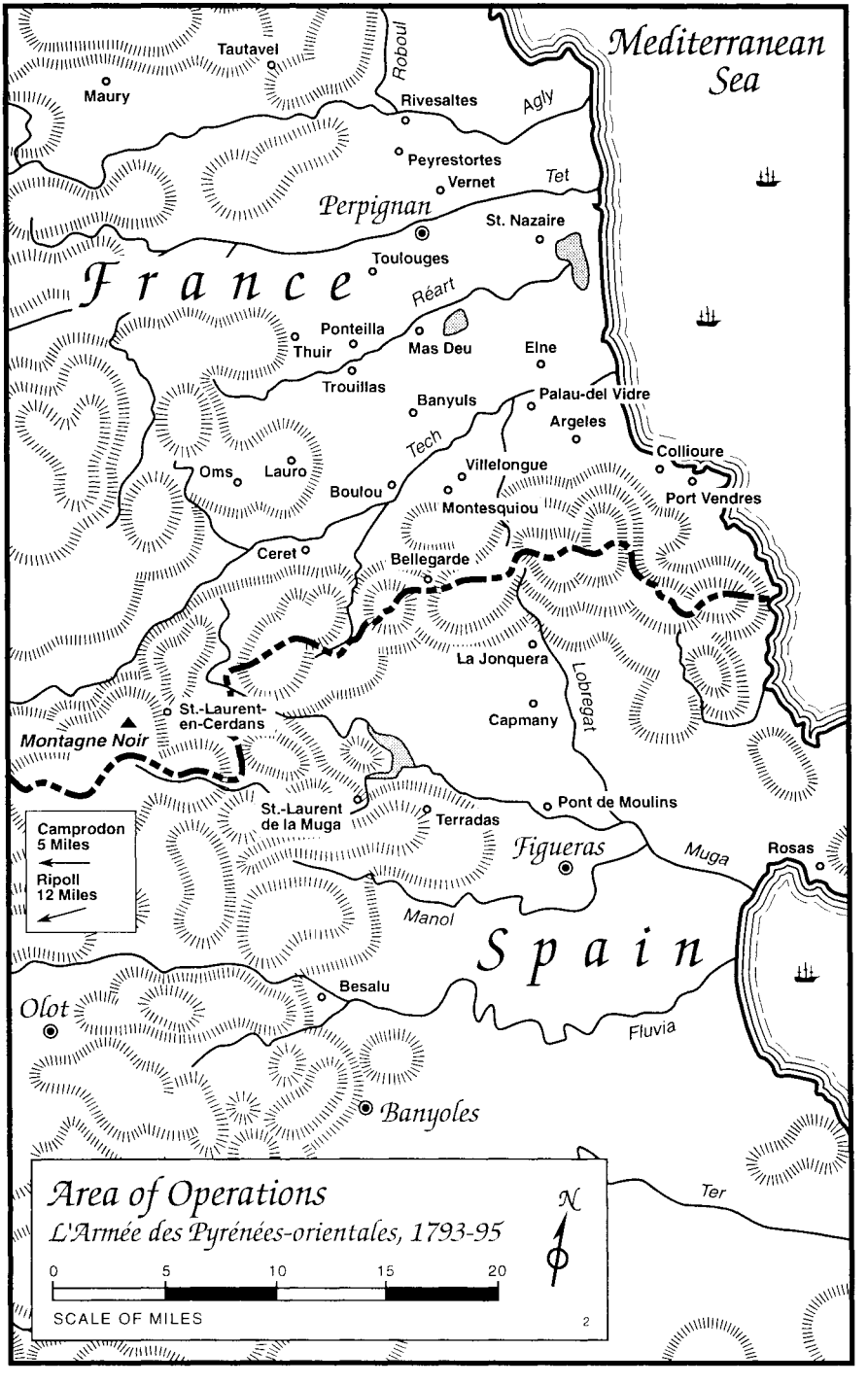
Across the frontier, General Don Antonio Ramón Ricardos had concentrated 50,000 Spanish troops around Figueras. He held the advantage: trained, armed men,

plenty of cavalry, and enough artillery to decimate the camp. Ricardos launched an offensive to test his advantages on 17 April and routed the French at Céret three days later. Satisfied with his limited success, Ricardos withdrew to Figueras, leaving his rattled enemy to regroup around Perpignan. Unhappy with failure, the representatives-on-mission promptly removed General LaHoulière, who committed suicide in despair. Marquis Louis-Antoine de Flers arrived to take command on 14 May. De Flers had experience, but he was too stodgy for the patriotic volunteers, who were embarrassed by their defeat at Céret. Regardless of their opinion, he decided on an offensive at Saint-Laurent-en-Cerdans, an outpost on the road to Figueras, which was held by two battalions from the Gard. De Flers ordered Lannes's 2nd Battalion, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Jacques Laterrade, to reinforce the outpost. When they reached it they found the Gard volunteers running toward a nearby village. The Spanish attacked just as the 2nd Battalion collided with the fleeing volunteers and hit them all with a barrage of artillery and musket fire. Laterrade tried to make a stand, but the sustained fire forced him to retreat. The retreat degenerated into a rout as the men of the 2nd Battalion joined the Gard volunteers in flight.[5]

Second-lieutenant Lannes ran as fast as anybody until he suddenly stopped, out of range, apparently mortified that he was being such a coward. Intent on making instant amends, he yelled at his comrades in Gascon-accented profanity over the din of the Spanish guns. "Stop right now, goddammit! Stop, you assholes! We're going the wrong fucking way! Follow me!" Just as quickly the rout turned into a counterattack, and the Spanish, deciding the outpost was not worth further effort, retreated in orderly ranks to their original positions across the frontier. The representatives approved of this engagement and noted in one of their many reports to Paris that "the conduct of the 2nd Battalion was exemplary in the recent combat at Saint-Laurent."[6]

Saint-Laurent-en-Cerdans was the first and last time Lannes ran away from the enemy, but he admitted he was often scared. "Anybody who says he's never been afraid is a liar, an idiot, and an asshole," he later told his oldest son, without bothering to moderate his language. "I've always been afraid of war, as I told [Napoleon] more than once," he confided to a friend. "I get over it by concentrating on what I'm supposed to do. Hear that regimental band outside? As long as the music's playing, the troops aren't supposed to care that they're marching toward death. And I'm supposed to show up on the battlefield in front of my men, looking like I'm going to nothing more exciting—or dangerous—than a wedding."[7]

De Flers dispatched the newly arrived General Luc-Simeon Dagobert with 5,000 troops to hold a position at Mas d'Eu. Ricardos sent 15,000 troops to ensure that the French would *not* hold this position. The Spanish attacked in strength, drove Dagobert back, and then returned in almost desultory fashion to their camp at Boulou. The French raced back to the walls of Perpignan, where Dagobert managed to halt their headlong flight. With two embarrassing defeats and one marginal victory to his credit, de Flers sent his undisciplined and chastened troops back to basic training. He created a new advance-guard and gave it to Dagobert, an odd choice under the circumstances. The advance-guard had 12,500 troops, including


Mediterranean Sea
Tautavel
Maury
Roboul
Rivesaltes
Agly
Peyrestortes
Vernet
Tet
Perpignan
St. Nazaire
Toulouges
France
Réart
Ponteilla
Thuir
Mas Deu
Elne
Trouillas
Banyuls
Palau-del Vidre
Argeles
Tech
Collioure
Oms
Lauro
Villelongue
Boulou
Montesquiou
Port Vendres
Ceret
Bellegarde
La Jonquera
Lobregat
St.-Laurent-en-Cerdans
Montagne Noir
Capmany
Pont de Moulins
St.-Laurent de la Muga
Terradas
Figueras
Muga
Rosas
Camprodon 5 Miles
Ripoll 12 Miles
Manol
Spain
Besalu
Olot
Fluvia
Banyoles
Ter
Area of Operations
L'Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, 1793-95
N
0 5 10 15 20
SCALE OF MILES
2

Lannes's 2nd Battalion, to face Ricardos if he decided to take any decisive action.[8]

The Spanish general moved to Ponteilla, southwest of Perpignan, and attacked the French camp on 17 July. De Flers refused to let his half-trained troops outside the walls. Instead, he used artillery fire and the advance-guard. Ricardos thought he was outnumbered, or at least outgunned, and withdrew to Ponteilla. It was not enough for the military authorities; they appointed another commander to replace de Flers and expected him to accomplish something a bit more definitive. General Hilarion-Paul Barbantane believed an offensive was required and ordered General Eustache-Charles d'Aoust, with 2,000 of his best men, including Lannes's battalion, to retake Vernet. Tired of being surrounded by the Spanish, Perpignan's citizens cheered the troops from the walls and shouted for d'Aoust to push all the way to the enemy's camp at Peyrestortes. D'Aoust complied and advanced with three columns. Pierre Banel, now colonel of the 2nd Battalion, launched the first attack at five in the afternoon, but it failed. Unwilling to stop, d'Aoust ordered the other two columns forward, and overwhelmed the Spanish two hours later. With minimum casualties, the advance-guard managed to relieve the enemy of guns, baggage trains, and money, all useful to the depleted army. The twenty-six captured flags provided a psychological boost.[9]

The army had redeemed itself enough to risk an attack on Ricardos' camp at Ponteilla. On 21 September General Florimond Goguet sent the 2nd Battalion against the Spanish at Trouillas while the rest of his forces attacked Ponteilla. Banel and Lannes succeeded, but the rest of the offensive failed because d'Aoust and Dagobert disliked each other, a typical problem among many revolutionary commanders. The representatives removed Dagobert, and d'Aoust lasted two more weeks. Exasperated with the army's disappointing track record and worried about the southern frontiers, authorities in Paris chose General Louis-Marie Turreau as commander-in-chief. Regardless of Turreau's military abilities, at least he brought General Augereau with him. When they reached Perpignan on 15 October, they found the army plagued by hunger, typhus, the cold Pyrenees autumn, and a distinct lack of motivation. They tackled motivation first, then collected arms and clothing, commandeered food and medicine from Perpignan, and ordered basic drills for everybody.[10]

After a week, Turreau thought his men were sufficiently motivated, drilled, and dressed for an offensive. During the third week of October, he sent them in quick succession against enemy positions at Port-Vendres, Collioure, and Banyuls. The Spanish were forced out of these positions and back closer to the frontiers, but again they had not been defeated. Lannes took part in the first two actions, which earned him a promotion to first lieutenant on 20 October. During the combat at Banyuls the next day, a Spanish musket ball slammed through his left arm. The nasty wound was worth another promotion, this time to grenadier captain. An interesting if painful trend appeared to be developing.[11]

Lannes argued that his wound was not worth bothering about. Ignoring Gascon stubbornness, Banel sent him to Perpignan and the house of the accommodating Bonnet family to recuperate. Their guest, who made the most of his hostesses' sympathy by being charming, appropriately helpless, and not cursing too much, captivated Madame Bonnet and her young daughter. Mademoiselle Françoise later

said when she told him about the enemy's attack on the camp outside Perpignan, Lannes claimed he had recovered enough to join his grenadiers. Demanding her mother's scarf for an improvised sling and staggering out to his horse—Madame Bonnet argued he was as weak as a baby and had no business going anywhere—he rode off to what mother and daughter thought was a glorious but foolhardy demise. He returned very late that night, exhausted, filthy, blood staining the once-pristine scarf, leading his horse with its reins looped around his neck. Madame Bonnet put him to bed at once, where he remained for more than a week, suffering from a high fever and the effects of too much bravado.[12]

Another command change had taken place during his absence. Turreau left on 22 November, d'Aoust succeeded him for six days, and was then replaced by General François-Amédée Doppet at the representatives' whim. Doppet was a doctor and, if nothing else, he could at least patch the wounds of men he would command with an appalling incompetence. He knew enough to realize his troops were too scattered after the various engagements the previous month and prepared to bring them back to the camp at l'Union. To do so required attacking Villelongue, a village standing squarely on the road to his camp. Not entirely a fool, Doppet decided a hand-picked company of 500 grenadiers could take the village, and left the details to Banel. He had no trouble choosing either grenadiers or their leader, and sent a note to Lannes in Perpignan. "I know you haven't recovered, my friend, but I need you. This honor belongs to you." In spite of the flattering language, the "honor" included a reasonably certain chance of getting killed.[13]

Lannes did not care about his chances, whatever they might be, and left the Bonnet's comfortable hospitality without a second thought. He made the most of the opportunity for glory and honor; his grenadiers cleared the road of enemy outposts, and attacked the Villelongue redoubts. The Spanish sustained heavy casualties, though not as serious as those of a Portuguese garrison holding one of the redoubts—the grenadiers massacred them to a man. Before the smoke cleared, Ricardos sent an envoy to ask for a two-hour cease-fire. Unfortunately for the envoy, the first French officer he encountered was Captain Lannes, who by this time was not feeling very well and responded with more than his usual Gascon attitude and grenadier language. "Your general's fucking with me if he thinks I'm going to stop now! I'll give him ten minutes, enough time for a duel. What an ass!" With no cease-fire—and no duel—the French took Villelongue that day, 25 December. For his bravery and leadership skills, if not for his language, Lannes was promoted to *chef de brigade*. The new grenadier colonel returned to Perpignan, ordered to stay put until the army surgeons cleared him for active duty.[14]

This time he was billeted with another widow, Madame Thérèse Méric, and her two teenaged children. Madame Méric was appalled by this republican hero standing on her doorstep, his uniform carelessly mended, boots worn, hair pulled back into an untidy queue. A lady with undisguised middle-class pretensions and no known political convictions, she did not take to her unwelcome visitor at all. She called Lannes a young sans-culotte and an adventurer without much of a future as far as she could see. Setting him straight at once, she told him about her dead husband, who she claimed had been a prosperous banker, and her family's secure status in

polite Perpignan society. Her nineteen-year-old daughter, Jeanne-Josèphe-Barbe, nicknamed Polette, did not share her mother's aversion. A vivacious, pretty, free-spirited girl with snapping dark eyes, she thought the grenadier colonel was fascinating and dangerous to know. Lannes did absolutely nothing to change her mind. Developing his role as wounded hero into an art form, he charmed Polette in spite of glacial maternal disapproval. He did so by telling her war stories, long on personal credit, hyperbole, and Jacobin rhetoric, equally short on accuracy. He managed on his own, without assistance from any latter-day Cyrano de Bergérac. Fortunately, Polette was no Roxanne; she evidently preferred tales of blood and danger to well-crafted poetic phrases more suitable to a young lady's ears. He also engaged in a bit of one-up-manship with Madame Méric by adding considerable luster to his family's status and net worth.[15]

By the time Lannes returned to the army, Polette's willfulness and his willingness had cemented their relationship. Added to this was a natural attraction between two young people in a situation replete with a novelist's clichés and a clever web spun by a neat set of half-truths and unabashed lies. Unfortunately, neither of the young lovers would turn out to be what the other expected—or wanted—but that reality was still in the future. So was the fact that Polette's vivacity, the quality that attracted the colonel's notice in the first place, would eventually condemn her in his eyes and forever damn her in the eyes of later biographers. The dashing if slightly unkempt and decidedly uncouth hero would be rarely at home with her, and the roseate picture of his family's means would give her a nasty jolt. The biographers also gracefully, pointedly, and erroneously absolved Lannes from any wrongdoing because heroes do not make mistakes, even in their personal relationships.

Meanwhile, the Convention dispatched General Jean-Coquille Dugommier to the Pyrénées-orientales. Dugommier had been successful at Toulon the previous December, with considerable assistance from the then artillery captain Bonaparte, and gave the army its first real sense of continuity and opportunity for significant victories. He arrived in Perpignan on 14 January and immediately set to work. He consolidated the bulk of the troops at l'Union and placed General Dominique Pérignon in command. General François Sauret's 5,000 troops were cantoned at Saint-Nazaire, and Augereau's 6,300 held Toulouges. Dugommier complained to the Committee of Public Safety that he could do nothing if it kept diverting reinforcements and supplies to rival armies. He pointed out conditions endemic to his orphan army: the troops lacked arms and artillery, wore a comic hodgepodge of uniforms, sported wooden shoes rather than boots, and never had enough to eat. The Committee responded to Dugommier's barrage of indignant letters and the situation slowly began to improve.[16]

The professional but indolent General Ricardos had died and his replacement, General O'Reilly, succumbed to a stomach ailment en route to his new command. General Don Luis Fermin La Unión arrived the first week of April, apparently healthy enough but lacking Ricardos's abilities. At the same time, Dugommier told his men the time for reacting to whatever the enemy chose to do was over—they were going to drive them across the borders into Spain. He waited until the end of April, when the army had improved enough for a sustained attack, and chose the

Spanish camp at Boulou and the Montesquiou redoubt. Dugommier ordered Pérignon's troops, including Lannes's two grenadier regiments, to take both positions while Augereau's division created a distraction at Céret. Sauret would engage the Spanish along the coast to keep them from interfering.[17]

Augereau made perfect bait; La Unión sent 3,000 men after him, leaving less than 9,000 at Boulou. Pérignon reached Montesquiou before dawn on 30 April. Though it was heavily fortified, Lannes and Banel launched an assault against the redoubt and fought their way forward for the next few hours. The redoubt fell by afternoon and Boulou, with its stockpiled artillery and supplies, the next day. The victors also discovered several French émigrés among the prisoners they had rounded up. The Convention had issued specific orders concerning émigrés: they were to be shot. Dugommier did not want to obey these Draconian orders, and Pérignon said because they were removed, more or less, from the Convention's vigilance, he could get away with a degree of mercy. He handed the émigrés over to Colonel Lannes, with instructions to escort them safely across the border. Lannes hated émigrés and thought the Convention had the right idea, but he hauled them to the frontier and turned them loose, his opinion of them ringing in their ears.[18]

One historian wrote eloquently—and inaccurately—about the incident, praising Lannes's action as humane and worthy of the "heroic soldier" he would soon become. In his haste to praise, the author missed the point: Lannes obeyed a direct order, even though he disagreed with it. There was nothing humane about it. When future orders regarding émigrés or rebels were less specific, he would execute orders, émigrés, and rebels with a willing thoroughness.[19]

The 2nd Battalion remained idle while Dugommier considered what to do next. Lannes thought the commander took too long, and added inactivity to a growing list of things he hated. He had volunteered to fight and that was what he expected to do; the enforced idleness made him short-tempered and crabby. A fulsome letter of praise from the 2nd Battalion officers, noting his exploits and recent promotion "due to exemplary bravery and patriotism," made him feel better for about a day. Then he went back to wondering when the next stage of the campaign that, in his opinion, had not been especially hazardous, would begin.[20]

La Unión had not been idle. He increased his strength to 45,000 troops spreading along the frontiers. Dugommier did not feel up to challenging the superior enemy forces, and chose instead an arms manufacturing stronghold at Ripoll, just across the border. Doppet attacked on 11 June but retreated in disorder when he ran into a large Spanish force. With orders to support him, Augereau sent General Louis Lemoine forward, but the Spanish cut him off. Frustrated, Augereau commandeered Lannes and 1,200 grenadiers from Pérignon and told them to rescue Lemoine. Lannes and his men fought their way through the Spanish, freed Lemoine, and retreated safely to Augereau. Pérignon never saw his grenadier colonel again. Typical of the pervasive informality in this army, generals in combat situations commandeered any available officers and troops, regardless to whom they reported. Augereau may have remembered that Lannes was a veteran of fearless assaults and chose him for that reason. It is more likely, however, that Lannes volunteered, bored and convinced any confrontation with the enemy, no matter how risky, was better

than doing nothing.[21]

By the end of July 1794 Dugommier was up to 34,000 troops, the largest number yet to serve in the Pyrénées-orientales. Augereau's division had 10,000 men scattered around Saint-Laurent de la Muga. Lemoine was at Terradas, General André Bon at Pla de l'Avat, General Jean-Joseph Guieu at the foundry of Saint-Laurent, and General Jean Davin at Saint-Georges. Colonel Lannes was probably with Augereau, though he did not show up until renewed fighting broke out on 3 August. La Unión took the offensive that morning with 22,000 troops commanded by General Curten advancing against Augereau. Twelve thousand more attacked Lemoine at Terradas, with half that many, and forced him out. General Guillaume Mirabel arrived with reinforcements, including Lannes and his grenadiers, and retook Terradas. Unfortunately, Mirabel was killed later that afternoon, although Bon and Davin pushed Curten's forces back to Figueras.[22]

When Augereau's division settled down again with no immediate prospects, Lannes thought he might as well go home for the first time in two years. He did not desert as so many had already done, but took leave with Augereau's blessing. In Lectoure he made the most of his welcome by family and friends who were impressed by his heroics and rapid promotions, all of which he naturally explained in the most glowing terms. When the novelty of acclaim wore off, he decided to attend a meeting of the local Jacobin society. The society was happy to have him, a "defender of our country, honorably wounded," and made him a member on 3 September 1794. As part of his acceptance speech, he warned the society about "false patriots," quick to show their approval as long as the army was winning, quicker to denounce the republic when it was not. He thought the society should form a committee to enforce billeting regulations for soldiers and volunteers, because he had already subjected one uncooperative townsman to a severe and undoubtedly profane diatribe for an appalling lack of patriotism. As speeches went, this one was not especially imaginative, but public speaking was not his forte—he preferred bringing folks around to his way of thinking with the point of his sword and a few well-chosen oaths. Nevertheless, it was an accurate reflection of his political views, which he never bothered to change, even when France was no longer a republic. Later recipient of much imperial glory and impressive financial rewards, Lannes still had a streak of unrepentant Jacobinism just below the glittering surface.[23]

Bellegarde, the last Spanish-held fortress in French territory, surrendered on 17 September. The way into Spain was relatively free now, with the fertile plains of Catalonia in easy reach. Dugommier did not hurry across the borders, however, because his army still suffered from combat losses, sickness, and desertions, and he saw no reason to risk the veteran forces he had so carefully nurtured with rash offensives into Spanish territory. Lannes returned from leave to discover he had not missed a thing. Before he could complain of inactivity, hunger forced Dugommier's hand. Supplies, always so dilatory in their arrival, had stopped altogether in the fall of 1794, and the army hovered on the edge of starvation. Plentiful food and even more plentiful Spanish troops waited across the border. The only serious obstacle to overcome, other than the enemy, of course, was Montagne Noire, a large hill covered

with a dark forest growing on steep red rocks. La Unión had constructed a series of redoubts and fortified positions along the frontier, then extended them from Figueras to Montagne Noire. The French watched the slow, orderly Spanish progression from strong point to strong point and, alerted to La Unión's plan, they prepared an offensive.[24]

Selected to form the front line, Augereau organized his division. Bon commanded the advance-guard as the rest of Augereau's troops moved south toward Saint-Laurent, with orders to reach it no later than midnight on 16 November. The next day, before dawn, Sauret reinforced Augereau as Dugommier arrived to oversee operations. Shortly afterward Augereau attacked Saint-Laurent, routing the enemy's left by midmorning. He stopped for further orders, and heard that a Spanish shell had killed Dugommier as he ate breakfast. The Convention's representative-on-mission, a M. Delbrel, appointed Pérignon as provisional commander before the smoke cleared. Pérignon thought he had better evaluate the situation before proceeding further, and Augereau held his position at Saint-Laurent until the commander made up his mind.[25]

When Pérignon decided what he wanted, he ordered Augereau to lead the advance-guard and resume the offensive. Included among the 11,440 troops were Bon and Lannes with his 105th grenadier regiment. Sauret's division marched off to create a diversion while Pérignon rode to Campmany to watch the action. Before dawn on 20 November, the advance-guard left for the Roure redoubt. Bon reached it first and surrounded the redoubt under heavy fire. Reinforced shortly after sunrise by Guieu and generals Pierre Chabert and François-Gilles Guillot, Bon charged the redoubt and routed the Spanish. Narrowly escaping the bloody action at Pont-des-Moulins, La Unión ran into his retreating troops, but he was killed by French fire. Total Spanish casualties, courtesy of the advance-guard, numbered over 8,000. The victory had been the most decisive yet won by the Armée des Pyrénées-orientales.[26]

The experience Lannes gained during this offensive proved his talent lay in leading advance-guard troops. He already knew he liked it, was good at it, and decided he would do this at every opportunity, whether the advance-guard was a regiment, division, or army corps. The threat of danger did not bother him, and he cavalierly ignored any resulting wounds unless, of course, they literally knocked him out.

After Montagne Noire Augereau's division settled into winter quarters and Lannes rode off to Perpignan, deciding he might as well benefit from this period of inactivity. With typical male egotism, he assumed Polette had not forgotten him, though he had not seen her in a year and had not bothered to write—probably a good thing. Polette had not forgotten him—neither had her mother. Madame Méric still refused to have anything to do with the uncultured, upstart officer, even though he was studiously polite to her and his uniform was in better shape. Ignoring this female dragon as much as possible, Lannes resumed his interrupted courtship in his usual style. This time he had even more stories to tell with himself in the starring role. It worked, of course. The headstrong young lady thought being married to the closest thing to d'Artagnan she had ever seen would be fun—and a neat bit of filial defiance.

Because she insisted on a more suitable match for her only daughter, Madame

Méric refused to take any part in the wedding plans. It was therefore a rather impetuous, thrown-together civil ceremony, like thousands during the period. Polette's mother and brother boycotted the event. The four witnesses in the mayor's office on 19 March 1795 included three of Lannes's army friends and an acquaintance of the Mérics who either did not share their disapproval or was sent to spy on the dubious proceedings. It is doubtful the happy couple returned to the Méric house for what would be a rather short honeymoon. Madame Méric's disdainfully expressed opinions and basilisk stares would dampen anyone's ardor, even that of an otherwise tough grenadier colonel. A few days after the wedding, Lannes left Polette with her mother and went back to the army.[27]

He sent for Polette a few weeks later because the army apparently was not going to do much that spring, and she would be in no danger from the enemy. He was right about that, but he completely overlooked another sort of peril. Though the camps had been full of the usual assortment of cantinières, vivandières, and blanchisseurs who provided brandy, food, clean laundry, and other equally useful services, officers' wives were a rarity. Polette did not arrive as a model of wifely decorum, either. She took one look at the smorgasbord of officers and set out to flirt with them all. The vivacity and spirit that had captivated her husband enchanted every male who was not blind. Polette never intended to do more than flirt, but she thrived on admiration and the rough gallantry offered her every time she poked her pretty nose outside her quarters. A good thing quickly became too much, and after a few weeks of trying to rein in his irrepressible wife, Lannes packed her off back to Perpignan.

General Barthélemy-Louis Schérer had replaced Pérignon in March. Little remained for him to do that spring except complete operations, which he carried out with scant fanfare and uninspired generalship, and receive initial peace overtures from the Spanish. The news of the treaty, concluded on 22 June 1795 at Basle, reached Schérer shortly after the signatures had dried. Once again short of resources, suffering from typhus contracted during the early summer operations, reduced by attrition and desertion, the remaining core of the ragtag Pyrénées-orientales felt vindicated and believed, with justification, that it had preserved the southern frontiers in spite of daunting odds inflicted by the Spanish armies and the policies of its own government.[28]

Colonel Lannes, impervious to fevers and other physical ailments, received another glowing letter of recommendation, this one from General Charles-Pierre Lamer, Augereau's chief-of-staff. The letter commended him to Augereau and the army for his valor and intrepid action in the face of the enemy. "All that one might say about him is infinitely less than he deserves," Lamer wrote. Such a résumé would come in handy, because Schérer had just received orders to join the Armée d'Italie with his troops, including Lannes and Augereau.[29]

Lannes went to Perpignan for a week or so. It was obvious he could not leave Polette there—she insisted anywhere was better than an unpleasant exile in her mother's house. Since tagging along with him to northern Italy was *not* an option, he sent her to Lectoure to live with his parents until he could make other arrangements. With that settled, more or less, he sent his friend Jean Pouzols a chatty letter as full of spelling errors as it was of tales of the splendid actions in

which he had taken part. The upcoming campaign apparently held no fear for him. "After the first battle those Piedmontese scum will be begging for peace," he predicted, and was almost right. It was also true that splendid actions and rapid promotions awaited Lannes in the near future, amazing friends, army comrades, and himself.[30]

NOTES

1. Jean-Baptiste-Marcellin Marbot, *Mémoires,* 3 vols. (Paris, 1891), I, 18, 20.

2. Georges Six, *Dictionnaire biographique des généraux et amiraux français de la Révolution et de l'Empire 1792–1814*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1934), II, 329; Damamme, *Lannes*, 27.

3. Service historique, Correspondance, Armées des Pyrénées-orientales/occidentales, Decrees, 28 April and 1 May 1793, Carton X^P 11; Ordres de bataille des armées en campagne, 1792–1815, 1793, Carton X^P 3; Service historique, Correspondance, Armées des Pyrénées-orientales, dossier 1, Carton X^P 11.

4. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Lt. Prosper-Cosme Lebrun, 25th ligne, *Campagne de 1793 dans les Pyrénées-orientales*, Carton MR 475, 8; Service historique, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Situations, March–May 1793, Carton B^4 166*; Ramsay W. Phipps, *Armies of the First French Republic*, 5 vols. (Westport, CT, 1980), III, 138.

5. Jacques Napoléon Fervel, *Campagne de la Révolution française dans les Pyrénées-orientales et description topographique de cette moité de la chaîne pyrénéenne*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1861), I, 21–25; Service historique, Ordres de bataille, 1793, Carton X^P 3; Phipps, Armies, III, 151. De Flers would also suffer from the suspicions of the representatives-on-mission because of his ties to the "traitor" Dumouriez. The representatives Espert, Bonnet, and Fabre removed him from command on 7 August 1793, and he was guillotined the next year, four days before Robespierre's fall on 27 July 1794. See Six, *Dictionnaire biographique*, I, 454; Phipps, *Armies*, I, 152; Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 17.

6. Lannes's rallying "speech" was passed down to his grandson by the marshal's widow, who carefully substituted the grenadier's original battlefield profanity for polite initial letters followed by ellipses. Lannes, *Maréchal Lannes*, 12; Service historique, Volontaires nationaux, Report, 30 May 1793, Carton X^W 34.

7. Lannes, *Maréchal Lannes*, 12.

8. Phipps, *Armies*, III, 152; Service historique, Ordres de bataille, June-August 1793, Carton X^P 3.

9. Service historique, Volontaires nationaux, report of 20 July 1793, Carton X^P 3; Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Situations, July 1793, Carton B^4 166*; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, *Campagne de 1793*, Carton MR 475, 20–22.

10. Service historique, Ordres de bataille, 1793, Carton X^P 3; Phipps, *Armies*, III, 159; Service historique, Correspondance, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales/occidentales, dossier 1, Carton X^P 11; Laurence Couturaud, Augereau, l'enfant maudit de la gloire (Paris, 1990), 23, 25–26; Phipps, *Armies*, III, 160; Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 20.

11. Service historique, dossier du maréchal Lannes, Carton MF^2 10. Thoumas has the date wrong. Evidently he misread the copy of Lannes's service record which the Archives de la guerre sent him on 26 October 1888.

12. L-M Poussereau, *Histoire du maréchal Lannes* (Nevers, 1910), 6–7.

13. Service historique, Correspondance, Armées des Pyrénées-orientales/occidentales,

dossier 1, Carton X^P 11; Service historique, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Situations, December 1793, Carton B^4 166*. Almost all of Lannes's biographers and secondary sources attribute the letter to a General Basset. However, no General Basset appears on the orders of battle rosters in Carton X^P 3, which are very thorough, in the Situations in Carton B^4 166*, or in Six's *Dictionnaire biographique*. There is a Basset de Montaigu, but this officer never served with the Pyrénées-orientales. See Phipps, *Armies*, III, 165; Lannes, *Maréchal Lannes*, 17; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 8; Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 22–23; Damamme, *Lannes*, 29.

14. Lannes, *Maréchal Lannes*, 18; Service historique, dossier maréchal Lannes, Carton MF^2 10.

15. Although Madame Méric claimed her husband Pierre had been a banker, he is listed as a *mercadier* or merchant on Polette's birth certificate in 1774. On the marriage license of 19 March 1795, someone had written *banquier* over the original word *marchant.*

16. Service historique, Correspondance, Armées des Pyrénées-orientales/occidentales, dossier 1, Carton X^P 11; Couturaud, *Augereau*, 23; Service historique, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Situations, December 1793–February 1794, Carton B^4 167*; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, *Campagne de 1793*, Carton MR 475, 91–93.

17. Service historique, Ordres de bataille, 1794, Carton X^P 3. Phipps said that Ricardos was allegedly poisoned while dining at Manuel Godoy's house on 13 March. O'Reilly's stomach ailment was more likely appendicitis. Phipps, *Armies*, III, 171. The center, under Pérignon's command, included the 2nd Battalion. Banel replaced Laterrade, who had died in Perpignan on 25 January, as the battalion's commander. For the first months of 1794, Lannes served under Pérignon. Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 26; Service historique, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Correspondance du général en chef Dugommier, 28 March-18 June 1794, Dugommier to Augereau, Pérignon and Sauret, 16 April 1794, Carton B^{4*} 122*; Service historique, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Correspondance du général en chef Dugommier, Dugommier to Sauret, 28 April 1794, Carton B^{4*} 122*; Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 26–27.

18. Fervel, *Campagnes des Pyrénées-orientales*, II, 56–57; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Mémoire historique des opérations de l'Armée des Pyrénées-orientales des affaires du 26 thermidor an II au 30 brumaire an III de la République française, Carton MR 481, 3. Phipps said Dugommier had not yet become so "embittered" as he would later be, and sparing the émigrés appeared a reasonable option to him at this time. Phipps, *Armies*, III, 177; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 10.

19. Fervel, *Campagnes des Pyrénées-orientales*, II, 64–65.

20. Service historique, dossier de maréchal Lannes, Carton $MF^2$10; Volontaires nationaux, Carton X^P 34; Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Situations, May–July 1794, Carton B^4 168*.

21. Service historique, Correspondance du général en chef Dugommier, Dugommier to Doppet, 3 June 1794, Carton B^4 122*; Phipps, *Armies*, III, 183; Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 28; Couturaud, *Augereau*, 30.

22. Service historique, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Situations, July–August 1794, Carton B^4 175*. The best map of the Pyrénées-orientales campaign is found in Fervel's definitive history. See Fervel, *Campagnes des Pyrénées-orientales*, *Atlas*, maps 1 and 2; Service historique, Registre de correspondance de la division Augereau, Augereau to Dugommier, 3 August 1794, Carton B^4 141*. For Lannes's participation, although the author got the date wrong, See Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 29.

23. Archives municipales de Lectoure. Régistre de la société montagnarde et révolutionnaire de Lectoure (23 May–1 November 1794).

24. Phipps, *Armies*, III, 195; Service historique, Registre de la division Augereau, Augereau to generals Davin, Bon, Beaufort, Duphot, and Guieu, 16–17 November 1794, Carton B^4 141*.

25. Service historique, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Registre de correspondance des répresentants du peuple Vidal, Delbrel et Goiupilleu, du 7 octobre 1794 au 22 janvier 1795, decree of 18 November 1794, Carton B^{4*} 81*.

26. Service historique, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales, Situations, November 1794, Carton B^4 178*; Service historique, Armée des Pyrénées-orientales [État-major général], Registre de correspondance, Pérignon to Augereau, 19 November 1794, Carton B^4 107*; Fervel, *Campagnes des Pyrénées-orientales*, II, 203.

27. According to the marriage license, General Banel, Colonel Mejan, and Captain Daguzan were the officers who witnessed the civil ceremony. All were Lannes's friends from Lectoure. The other witness, a Monsieur Chalumeau, who listed his occupation as *négociant*, may have been a Méric family acquaintance. Archives municipales de Perpignan, acte de mariage.

28. Service historique, Correspondance, Armées des Pyrénées-orientales/occidentales, dossier 1, March 1795, Carton X^P 11.

29. Service historique, dossier du maréchal Lannes, 26 June 1795, Carton MF^2 10.

30. Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 31.

Chapter 2

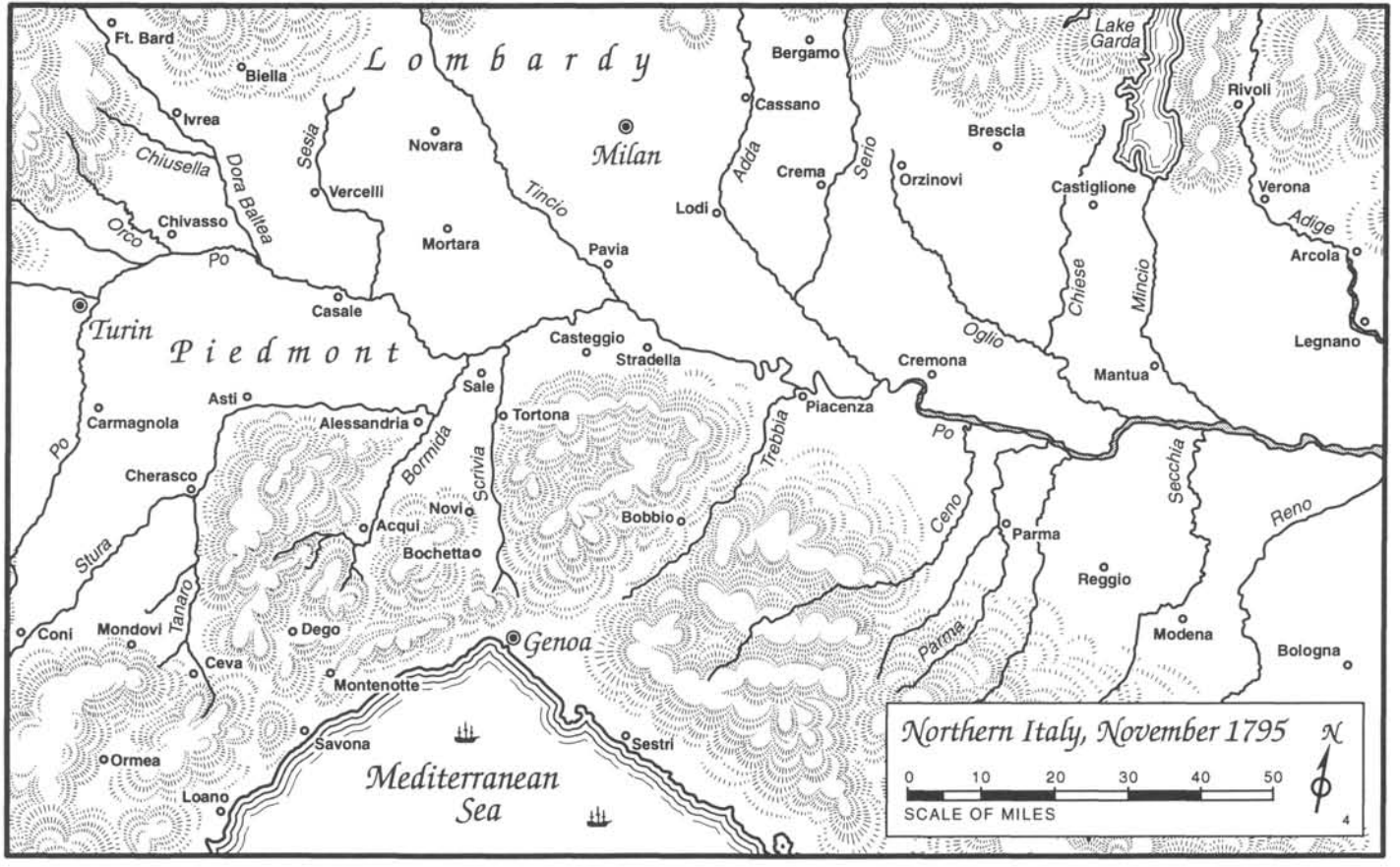
Friends in High Places: L'Armée d'Italie, 1795–1797

This officer deserves the greatest praises and the nation's recognition.
—Augereau to Schérer, November 1795

Although General Schérer took less than 15,000 men from the Pyrénées-orientales to northern Italy, they were veterans of combat and adversity. If they thought Italy might be better than the Pyrenees, they quickly discovered otherwise. The Armée d'Italie gave them no supplies, arms, uniforms, or pay, and a Lombard winter looked grim. Lannes certainly thought so when he arrived the middle of October, but Schérer allowed no time for complaints; he gathered his troops for an offensive near the Tanaro River. General André Masséna had developed the plan for the strategically challenged Schérer.

A heavy snowfall delayed the offensive for more than a week, then Schérer gave the order to advance. On 22 November, while Sérurier attacked the Austrian general Michael von Colli at Colle di San Bernardo, Augereau's division headed toward General Olivier Wallis at Loano. Wallis had fortified the town with batteries concealed by thick olive groves and reinforced the monastery at nearby Toirano. The next morning Banel's brigade charged across a rickety bridge and captured a redoubt from the startled defenders. When Banel was shot by an Austrian not too startled to fight back, Lannes took over and flushed the remaining enemy out of the monastery. Intent on avenging Banel and enjoying the upper hand, he chased them for three miles to San Pietro, where they scurried into another redoubt at Gazi. General Jean-Baptiste Rusca arrived in time to reinforce Lannes, and together they took the redoubt before the disorganized Austrians could load their twelve-pound guns. Wallis abandoned Loano and moved north to Acqui.[1]

However minor the success at Loano might be to the campaign, it would have to inspire the army between periods of shortages and dreadful weather. Officers and men went hungry more days than not, "slept in burrows dug out of frozen


Lombardy
Piedmont
Ft. Bard
Biella
Ivrea
Chiusella
Dora Baltea
Sesia
Vercelli
Novara
Chivasso
Orco
Po
Mortara
Tincio
Pavia
Milan
Lodi
Adda
Bergamo
Cassano
Crema
Serio
Orzinovi
Brescia
Lake Garda
Rivoli
Castiglione
Verona
Adige
Arcola
Chiese
Mincio
Legnano
Oglio
Cremona
Mantua
Turin
Casale
Casteggio
Stradella
Sale
Asti
Carmagnola
Alessandria
Tortona
Piacenza
Po
Trebbia
Bormida
Scrivia
Cherasco
Novi
Acqui
Bochetta
Bobbio
Ceno
Parma
Secchia
Reno
Reggio
Modena
Bologna
Stura
Tanaro
Coni
Mondovi
Dego
Ceva
Montenotte
Genoa
Savona
Sestri
Ormea
Loano
Mediterranean Sea
Northern Italy, November 1795
N
0 10 20 30 40 50
SCALE OF MILES
4

ground, covered with tree branches and wild thyme," and "had neither bread nor wine, only whatever the most intrepid scouts managed to scavenge under the enemy's noses."[2]

Loano had been tough going, but no worse than the rough-and-tumble engagements Lannes had experienced in the Pyrenees. Once again, he had assumed command when he had to and proved he was more than a brave officer charging the enemy regardless of odds and risks. Augereau had noticed this and thought it deserved comment. "With intelligence and bravery Colonel Lannes executed the orders entrusted to General Banel," he wrote to Schérer. "This officer deserves the nation's recognition." Always susceptible to praise and motivated by it, Lannes spent the harsh winter imagining ways to increase the amount of attention he could earn when the army launched a spring offensive.[3]

He would have to wait a while. Most of the demi-brigades were at half-strength or less because of desertion, illness, and casualties. Lannes became a victim of necessity when the 105th and the 99th demi-brigades were amalgamated into the new 51st demi-brigade. Lannes had equal seniority with the other colonel, but military authorities thought otherwise and placed him *à la suite.* Not a man to be stymied by a technicality, he began an unofficial career of showing up near a battlefield, volunteering for action, and charging off after the enemy with whatever troops were available. The troops did not matter, and neither did the enemy—in this situation the horse always preceded the cart.[4]

Because France's most persistent and annoying enemy, Great Britain, was militarily beyond its reach, the Directory chose the Habsburg possessions in Lombardy and Piedmont as more approachable targets. The government already had an army nearby, but needed an aggressive commander-in-chief and reinforcements before launching an offensive. General Bonaparte, more aggressive than the Directory could imagine, arrived at the end of March to command a depleted, deprived, and demoralized army. Once he introduced himself to his divisional generals, and defused their resentment of his youth and alleged inexperience, the army took on a new life. The thin, poorly clothed, scarcely armed, and unpaid men responded to their new commander and his promises of wine, women, and glory with an amazing vigor.[5]

The Austro-Piedmontese armies, however, stood between them and these enticing rewards. Field-marshal Johann von Beaulieu, an Austrian on the far side of seventy, covered Milan with 30,000 troops. General Colli's 15,000 Piedmontese were between Mondovi and Ceva. Generals Eugene Argenteau's and Johann Provera's Austro-Piedmontese 15,000 men held the center at Millesimo and Dego. Bonaparte placed the main part of his army between the Tanaro River and Savona, with Masséna on the right and Augereau in the center to split the Piedmontese from Beaulieu's Austrians. General Jean-Baptiste Cervoni's advance-guard brigade held Voltri, just northwest of Genoa and uncomfortably close to Beaulieu. Lannes was with Cervoni, temporarily commanding a demi-brigade he had borrowed from some less-inspired colonel.[6]

Beaulieu intended to cut General Amédée-Emmanuel Laharpe's division off from Savona. He did not know that Cervoni's brigade, not Laharpe's division, occupied Voltri; if he had, he probably would not have attacked in force. Bottled up with Cervoni, Lannes managed to hold his ground against superior numbers until after nightfall on 9 April. Colonel Auguste Marmont recalled their position was "very much up in the air," but they survived through courage, dogged

fighting, and Beaulieu's "singular ineptness" as a field commander. Another eyewitness claimed the 3,000 defenders fought off more than 10,000 enemy troops with "the intrepidity associated with free soldiers." It is more likely that Lannes fought not because he was free but because he had a natural talent for it. Only after the firing ended would he bother to reflect on the more or less lofty republican ideals that motivated him. Taking advantage of darkness, Lannes and Cervoni slipped out of Voltri and through the mountains to Savona, leaving fewer than 170 casualties behind. When Beaulieu's troops occupied Voltri at dawn the next day, they found no one there.[7]

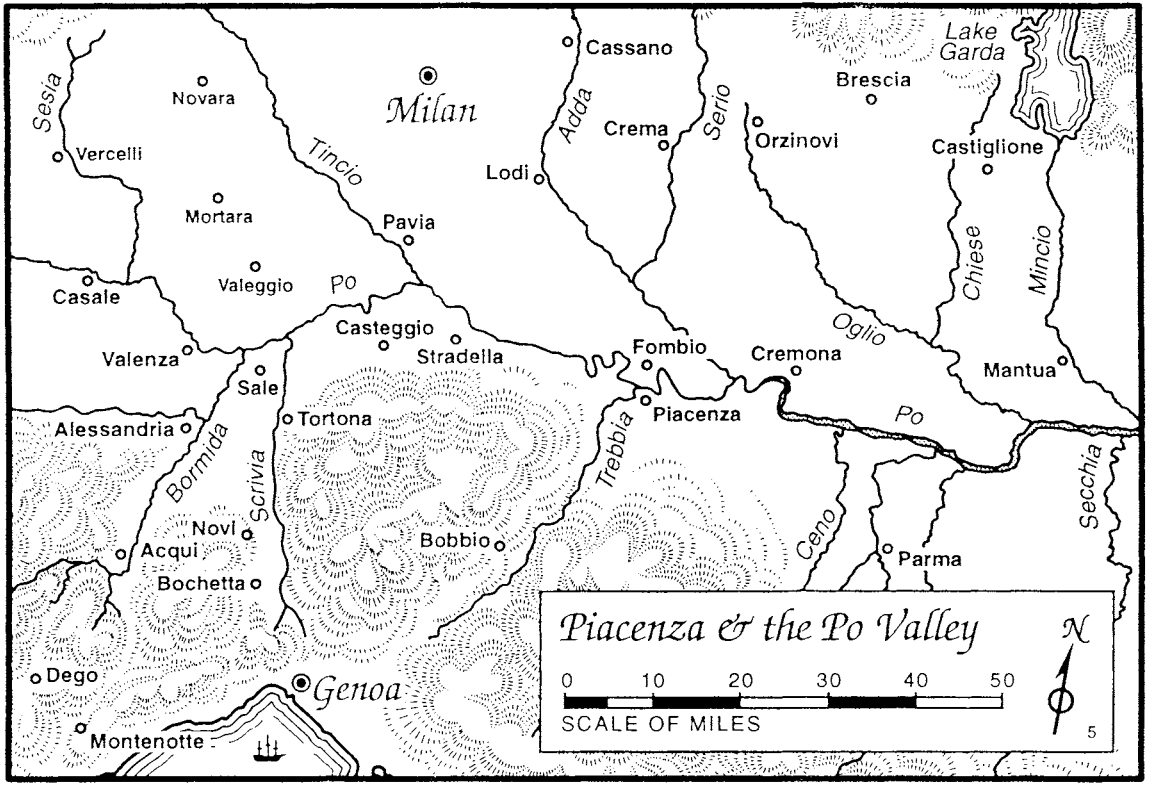
Lannes rejoined Laharpe and Masséna behind the town of Montenotte. On 12 April, Beaulieu attacked Masséna's 13,000 men at four in the morning with 15,000 troops. Although the odds were close enough, the commanders' abilities were not. Masséna easily repulsed the Austrians, and Beaulieu withdrew to try his luck the next day against Laharpe. Nothing changed—with Lannes and his grenadiers in the midst of the fighting, Beaulieu lost more than 4,000 killed, wounded, or captured compared with French losses of 300 killed and more than 600 wounded. Most of the casualties on both sides occurred during the first half-hour of the battle.[8]

Beaten twice in two days, Beaulieu regrouped around Dego, while Colli and his Piedmontese troops moved west toward Millesimo near the Cosseria heights. Masséna and Laharpe confronted Beaulieu at Dego; the battle lasted two days, 13 and 14 April. Augereau defeated Colli at Millesimo and then Provera on the Cosseria heights on the 13th. General Banel was killed leading his troops.[9]

Bonaparte established his headquarters at Millesimo and summoned Laharpe's division to join him. General Jean-Baptiste Meynier's small division held Dego and, as his troops dispersed to forage early in the morning of the 14th, they left the town barely covered. General Karl von Vukassovich took advantage and struck with five battalions. Alarmed by the heavy firing, Bonaparte ordered Laharpe to Dego and followed him. Lannes's demi-brigade got there first, managed to repel Vukassovich in spite of the odds, and the Austrians fled.[10]

Dego could have been just another routine day on the battlefield for Lannes, but it was fortunately more. Bonaparte had noticed his usual mix of skill and courage, especially during the second day's fighting, checked him out, and decided he was worth a permanent command. A comedy of errors soon followed. Bonaparte's aide and secretary, Colonel Jean-Andoche Junot, under pressure from a multiplicity of orders, made a mistake. Bonaparte wanted Lannes to have the 69th demi-brigade, whose colonel had recently been killed. Instead, Junot wrote the 39th demi-brigade, whose colonel had also been a casualty. The 39th belonged to Augereau and he already given it to another officer. As a result, Lannes remained *à la suite*, but neither career nor reputation suffered—catching Bonaparte's eye was worth more than several demi-brigades. Three weeks later Bonaparte created a new advance-guard under General Claude Dallemagne and gave Lannes the 6th and 7th grenadier battalions and the 4th carabinier battalion. In a short time, this élite unit earned the sobriquet *la colonne infernale*. More important, Bonaparte had recognized Lannes's talent to skillfully—and often impetuously—lead an advance-guard. Both qualities were needed in this campaign.[11]

After the army crushed Colli and the Piedmontese at Mondovi, Bonaparte dictated the Armistice of Cherasco on 28 April without bothering to consult the


Piacenza & the Po Valley
N
0 10 20 30 40 50
SCALE OF MILES
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Milan
Genoa
Cassano
Lake Garda
Brescia
Novara
Sesia
Vercelli
Tincio
Adda
Crema
Serio
Orzinovi
Castiglione
Lodi
Mortara
Pavia
Chiese
Mincio
Casale
Valeggio
Po
Casteggio
Stradella
Oglio
Fombio
Cremona
Mantua
Valenza
Sale
Tortona
Piacenza
Alessandria
Bormida
Scrivia
Trebbia
Po
Secchia
Novi
Acqui
Bobbio
Ceno
Parma
Bochetta
Dego
Montenotte

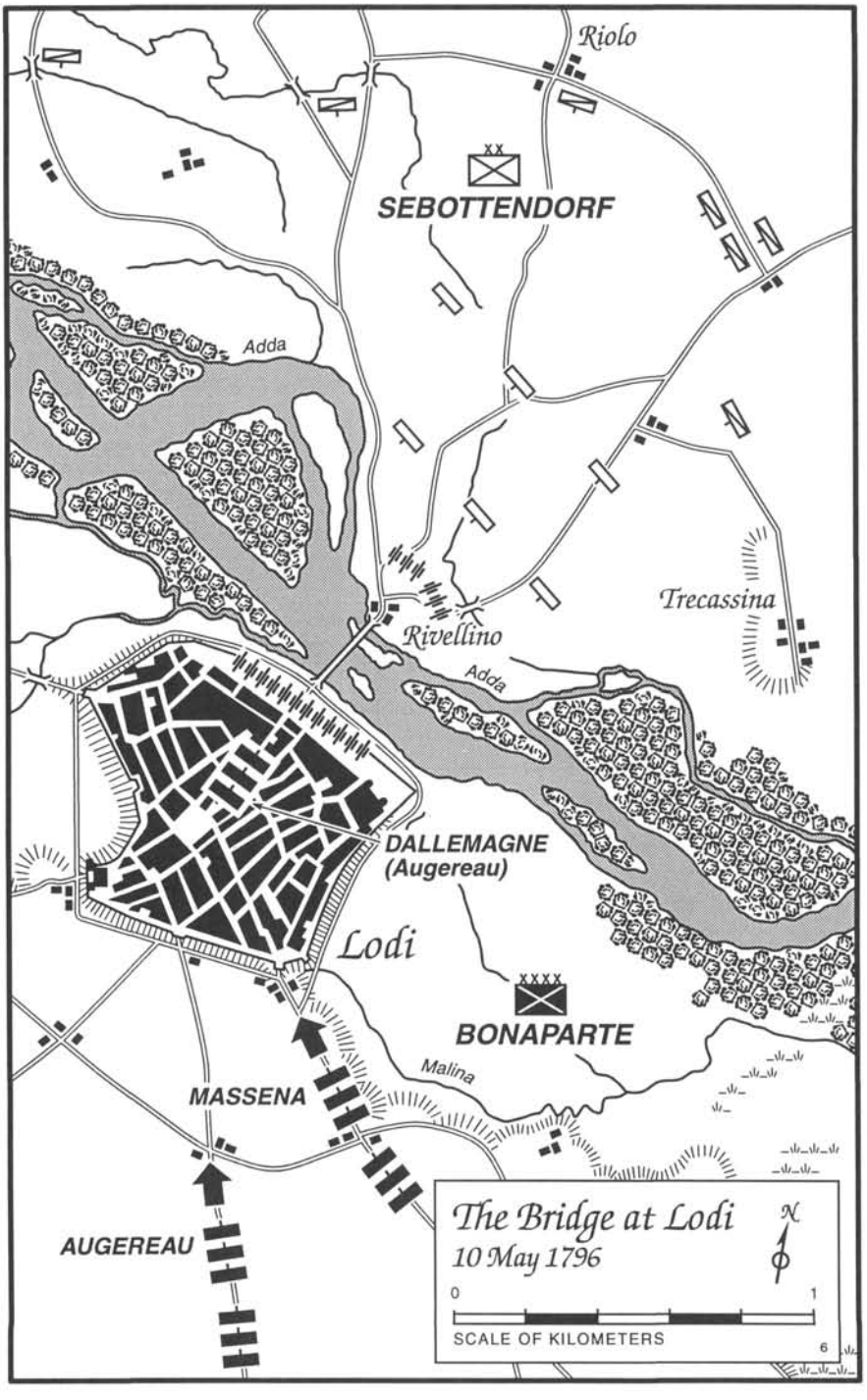
Directory. He then turned to deal with the Austrians at Acqui and accomplish his second goal, the liberation of Lombardy. The cautious Beaulieu had retired across the Po, and Bonaparte sent Dallemagne and Lannes through the rugged Apennines to secure a crossing at Piacenza. The Po was at least 500 yards wide there, with no intact bridge any closer than Valenza, a short distance upriver. General Antoine-François Andréossy had already reconnoitered at Piacenza and told Lannes he could cross. When Bonaparte sent a small force to Valenza to act as a decoy, Lannes led his column on a forty-four-mile forced march to Castel San Giovanni in less than thirty-six hours, much of it in darkness, and reached Piacenza by dawn on 8 May. Two squadrons of Austrians and Neapolitans waited on the other side. Lannes's grenadiers crossed in boats under a hail of enemy fire, landed on the opposite bank, and chased the enemy toward Fombio so the rest of Dallemagne's troops could cross unopposed. Colonel Marmont thought it had been a neat bit of soldiering. Lannes thought it was business as usual—he had orders to secure a crossing, and he did; running the enemy off was common sense.[12]

General Anton Liptay waited at Fombio with 5,000 infantry and another 1,000 cavalry. Sharpshooters manned the town's crenellated walls, with infantry barricading the streets. Regardless of the strong defenses, Lannes and his column rushed the town, forced open the gates, and then stormed into the streets. The attack proved too much for Liptay. Expelled from Fombio and chased to Codogno, he managed to cross the Adda River at Pizzighettoni, burning the bridge behind him. Bonaparte congratulated Lannes on his efforts, telling him the success at Fombio was in large part due to his personal courage.[13]

Although the Piacenza crossing and capture of Fombio were small but crucial stages in Bonaparte's pursuit of Beaulieu, their success illustrated Lannes's contributions to the Armée d'Italie and his value to Bonaparte. The grenadier colonel's ability as an advance-guard commander showed his determination to execute orders regardless of the circumstances. However, his desire to succeed at any cost sometimes interfered with judgment. Only with time, experience, and maturity would Lannes develop into a first-rate commander. Bonaparte understood this in 1796, and for the next thirteen years he would alternately praise his subordinate and try to rein him in. At Saint Helena, creating his own legend and that of those had who served him, Napoleon remarked that Lannes's "courage outweighed judgment at first, but his judgment increased every day to approach a state of equilibrium—he was a very talented commander when he died."[14]

Beaulieu had crossed the Adda and moved on to Crema, ignoring Milan and leaving generals Philipp von Sebottendorf and Vukassovich to hold Lodi. Bonaparte wanted the Lombard capital, but he would have to march throughLodi to take it. He ordered Dallemagne and Lannes to Lodi; they moved so fast they ran headlong into Vukassovich's rear-guard. The startled enemy fled, sweeping Sebottendorf's battalion along with them, and regrouped outside Lodi. Sebottendorf stationed three Croatian battalions and fourteen guns at the end of the long, narrow wooden bridge over the Adda, supported by eight reserve battalions.[15]

The advance-guard began to cross the bridge, but enemy fire swept them off at once. Though Bonaparte ordered reinforcements, they made little difference against artillery fire. He rallied his officers, who charged across the bridge in determined, courageous confusion, their reluctant troops staggering behind them.


Riolo
XX
SEBOTTENDORF
Adda
Trecassina
Rivellino
Adda
DALLEMAGNE
(Augereau)
Lodi
XXXX
BONAPARTE
Malina
MASSENA
AUGEREAU
The Bridge at Lodi
10 May 1796
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SCALE OF KILOMETERS
6

Masséna, Dallemagne, Cervoni, Lannes, and even Alexandre Berthier, who as chief-of-staff was clearly out of his element, crossed the bridge and scattered the Croats. Sebottendorf scurried off to Crema, leaving his guns and 2,000 prisoners.[16]

As Beaulieu's troops withdrew toward the Mincio, Bonaparte entered Milan on 14 May in triumph. The scruffy victors received a warm welcome from "lovely Italian women who surrendered themselves [to the troops] with passion and abandon." Perhaps this welcome was more a statement of the Milanese ladies' dislike of Austrians than any real attraction toward the French liberators—by now officers and men needed a thorough cleaning. Without need for much imagination, it is amusing to speculate what sort of picture Lannes must have presented—his uniform unchanged for days, more likely weeks, covered in dust, dirt, dried mud from the Adda's banks, and plenty of enemy gunsmoke; his hair untidily braided and equally coated with dust; face burned by sun and wind, and unacquainted with a razor for some time. It was a brave and determined lady who got any closer to him than ten feet to express appreciation for her liberation. Only a very nearsighted lady with a severe head cold would throw herself into his arms in a fit of passion.[17]

After six weeks of hard campaigning, Bonaparte's army desperately needed everything. The commander-in-chief effectively dealt with affairs in order of priority, and revitalized both his army and the Lombard government. Lannes did not care much about political reorganization or new uniforms. More interested in future prospects for a new campaign, he did not have long to wait. Bonaparte gave General Charles Kilmaine four cavalry regiments and eight battalions of grenadiers and carabiniers, the latter divided between Lannes and Dallemagne. Although the commander-in-chief did not immediately assign the new advance-guard a specific objective, he sent Lannes off on an independent mission.[18]

Not everyone in Milan had welcomed the French, and not everyone in the Lombard countryside admired them. Some nobles and clergy, afraid of losing traditional prestige, privileges, and influence, used these malcontents to their advantage. Hefty levies imposed by Bonaparte to supply his army and send to the impoverished Directory made their task easier. As a bonus, increasing anti-French sentiment among peasants near Milan meant the army could not leave to pursue Beaulieu's forces.

Lannes got the rather inglorious job of dealing with recalcitrant nobles, clergy, and peasants. His first target was Binasco, halfway between Milan and Pavia, where the peasants were armed, had fortified their village, and had been striking French supply convoys headed toward Milan. Lannes arrived at Binasco on 24 May with a small force of grenadiers and captured the village without difficulty. Sending the women and children away, he had the partisan leaders rounded up and executed, then razed the village. The fire burned for three days, obliterating Binasco and further resistance in the immediate vicinity.[19]

Lannes executed his orders with ruthless efficiency and no moral misgivings. In his opinion, rebels were traitors and dangerous enemies, undeserving of compassion, and he would never change his mind about them. Although he might show mercy on the battlefield, he treated insurgents, foreign or domestic, with implacable harshness. Some biographers, intent on presenting as glorious a picture of their hero as possible, glossed over this and similar incidents. Others have characterized the execution of the Binasco rebels as a "war crime" and a

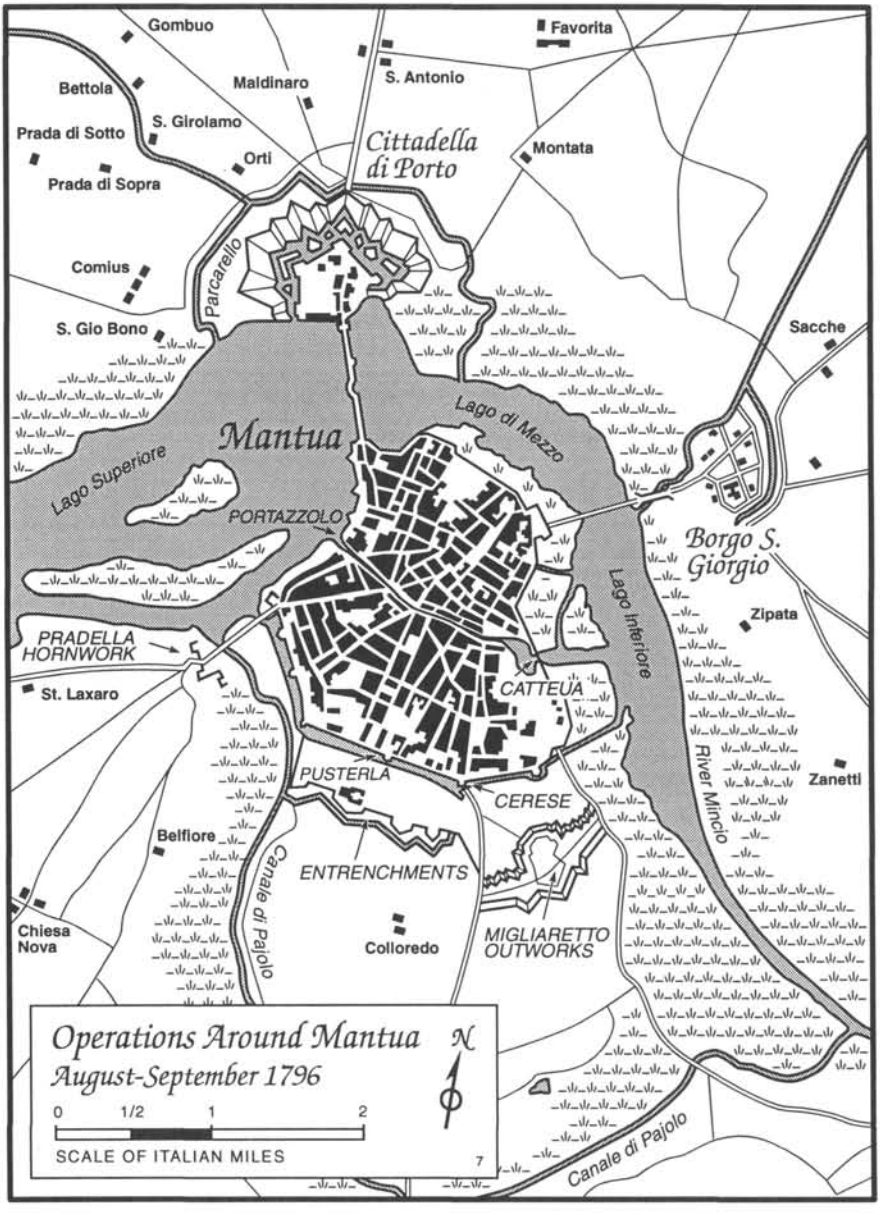
"terrible blot" on an otherwise stellar military reputation. Both sides missed the essential point: during this and future campaigns, an enemy was an enemy, whether he wore a uniform or a peasant's smock. Armed, dangerous, and determined, soldiers and rebels alike meant to kill, wound, or capture their enemies. Lannes knew that, and so did Bonaparte. To err on the side of misplaced compassion for civilian insurgents would have been fatal. In a letter written in August 1796 to his friend Pouzols, Lannes spoke about rebels in general and Vendéans in particular: "I used to feel sorry for them, but I don't have any pity for that rabble now—the army promises [them] a war to the death."[20]

Satisfied with eliminating one threat, Lannes moved on to the next on his list: 5,000 armed peasants garrisoning the citadel in Pavia. He entered the town with five grenadier battalions; this time the stakes were higher and so were the risks. The grenadiers forced the gates open and attacked the citadel, enduring a barrage of musket fire and stones lobbed over the walls. Under disciplined, relentless attack, the partisan resistance wilted. Most of the peasants panicked and ran from the citadel, where several detachments of Augereau's cavalry promptly ran them down. Lannes had the leaders executed by a firing squad. The rest of Augereau's troops, sent to Pavia as reinforcements, entered the liberated town, cheered by those who had disagreed with the rebels. Celebrating their victory, the French consumed over 6,000 bottles of wine that night.[21]

Lannes remained in Pavia for a few days, commandeering a house for his temporary headquarters. He chose it because it belonged to a lovely young Pavian girl—and her mother—who had asked him for protection from any remaining partisans and the rowdy French. One biographer, writing from the "official family version," believed that Lannes's motives were irreproachable, probably to balance his efficiently thorough execution of rebel leaders. It is more likely, however, that his interest in the young lady was not just to lend her protection. Installed in her house, under her grateful mother's nose, Lannes had every reason to expect more than mere verbal gratitude. Unfortunately, the lady's affections were engaged elsewhere—as she confided to the grenadier colonel, she was pledged to a young Austrian officer wounded in one of the recent engagements with the French. Probably realizing this young lady's regard could not be won by the methods with which he was most familiar—direct assault—and completely lacking kinder, gentler skills, he gave up any ideas of seduction. Two days later, on 26 May, he received a recommendation for promotion to *général de brigade*, worth more, doubtless, than a pretty girl's temporary approval.[22]

With its rear now secure, the reorganized and resupplied Armée d'Italie was free to confront Beaulieu across the Mincio River. Lannes led the advance-guard on a rapid forced march to Borghetto, capturing the bridge with his grenadier battalions before the startled Austrians could react. He took the village with no opposition, and then moved on to Peschiera.[23]

Bonaparte halted near Verona the first week in June. He did not seem to worry about his advance-guard, but the rear of the army was still in Genoese territory, its communication lines threatened by rebel bands from Arquata. He needed to eliminate this aggravation and sent Lannes, his expert in such matters, to deal with the partisans. Lannes took less than a thousand grenadiers with him, sufficient for the task at hand. He captured and burned Arquata, then executed the rebels, following his orders to the letter. However, he discovered the real rebel leader was a Genoese noble, the marchese di Spinola, whose chateau lay outside


Gombuo
Favorita
Bettola
Maldinaro
S. Antonio
Prada di Sotto
S. Girolamo
Cittadella di Porto
Montata
Orti
Prada di Sopra
Comius
Parcarello
S. Gio Bono
Sacche
Lago di Mezzo
Mantua
Lago Superiore
PORTAZZOLO
Borgo S. Giorgio
Lago Inferiore
Zipata
PRADELLA HORNWORK
St. Laxaro
CATTEUA
PUSTERLA
CERESE
River Mincio
Zanetti
Belfiore
ENTRENCHMENTS
Canale di Pajolo
Chiesa Nova
Colloredo
MIGLIARETTO OUTWORKS
Operations Around Mantua
August-September 1796
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2
SCALE OF ITALIAN MILES
7
Canale di Pajolo

Arquata. The noble was long gone, but Lannes taught him a lesson in absentia, razing the château and destroying its vineyards and farms. Resistance in Genoese territory evaporated.[24]

The army bivouacked before Mantua until mid-June. During this momentary respite, Lannes caught up on his correspondence. The letter he wrote to his wife on 12 June is typical: long on military details and personal opinions, short on sentiments most wives wanted to hear. "You've been complaining I don't write, [but] all this marching has kept me too busy. Since this campaign began, I haven't had a spare minute. We've fought the enemy everywhere and scattered the remnants all over the Tyrol. At the moment we're having fun besieging Mantua and Milan." Not a word about home or family, not a word of affection—it is clear where the general's priorities lay. Enough, one would think, to anger Polette, but sufficient to assure her at least that her husband was still alive.[25]

Lannes wrote her again the next day, either from guilt for running on and on about the army or, more likely, because he had heard from a friend that all was far from well on the domestic scene. The exaggerations he had once made with regard to his family's fortunes had caused more trouble than he realized. Polette was unhappy living with her "too provincial" in-laws, who disapproved of her "uptown ways" and high spirits. After several months of living in a war zone, Polette moved in with a married lady and ignored her in-laws. Lectoure was not Perpignan; small-town gossips, with Lannes's brother Bernard leading the charge, had a field day with the lovely young grass widow who refused to mope by the fireside while her husband risked his life for France. Not about to change her ways because of narrow-minded villagers, Polette enjoyed herself as much as she could, close to the edge of outright scandal but not crossing the line. Lannes was forced to arbitrate long-distance between his parents and his wife at the same time he faced enemies only slightly more deadly than his feuding family. "Please be patient, my dear," he pleaded, "and I'll make everything all right." He never did, not through lack of effort, but because the task was simply too formidable, even for him.[26]

Leaving slow, methodical General Jean-Matthieu Sérurier to oversee the siege at Mantua, Bonaparte left for Bologna, arriving on 19 June. He dispatched officers and troops in all directions to execute the Directory's orders and handle situations he considered more important. One of these required Lannes's unique talents. His mission entailed ensuring the loyalty of the citizens of the postage-stamp principality of Massa-Carrera to the French Republic by whatever means suited him, then confiscating government property for the Republic's benefit. Lannes arrived on 29 June with a small detachment of hussars and the 5th grenadier battalion. The authorities quickly professed their allegiance to France, frightened by grenadier oaths and so many fierce-looking soldiers milling about. Lannes confiscated the government's gold, sent it to Livorno for the Directory, then distributed property worth less than 200 livres to the astonished people of Massa-Carrera. He could afford to be generous—nobody had shot at him.[27]

A married lady *had* shot him down, however. The lively Signora Felizia attracted his attention and, like a fool, he confided to Albert Permon, the army commissariat officer billeted with her family, that he was going to seduce her. Lannes did not stand a chance—Permon had already charmed the compliant Signora Felize with songs and sonnets in his faultless Italian. Alarmed that the general might try anyway, Permon and his lady ran away to nearby Livorno. The

wronged husband appealed to Lannes for assistance, and a veritable regiment set out the next morning after the runaways. They were apprehended before nightfall. Signora Felizia was restored to her elderly husband, Permon dispatched to less dangerous quarters where his sonnets would have no effect, and Lannes swore off fickle and obviously undiscerning Italian ladies. According to his sister, Madame Laure Junot, Permon had been more frightened of Lannes than of the irate husband. She also claimed there was no contest because, as she put it, Lannes could storm a city much easier than seduce a woman—even an Italian.[28]

Lannes returned to Mantua, deciding he had better stick to fighting, which at least he understood, and participated in several inconclusive skirmishes. The most memorable occurred on 28 July, when the Austrian garrison launched a sortie through the Stradella gate. Three thousand troops stormed out in the late afternoon and overwhelmed the nearest French positions, including the gun batteries. Lannes's grenadiers charged into the mêlée just before midnight, restored order, and chased the Austrians back into Mantua, less 600 wounded and killed. The French reported no casualties.[29]

Field-marshal Dagobert Würmser replaced the elderly Beaulieu and brought a new army of 50,000 men from the Tyrol. With singular predictability, he ordered General Peter von Quasdanovich with half the army to march to the west of Lake Garda, led the other half east through the Adige valley, and sent an insignificant third column toward Verona. In spite of Würmser's pedestrian plan, Bonaparte's army was in a dangerous position: a reinforced enemy marching toward him and, to his rear, the threat of continued insurrection. Some Italian princes and Pius VI, who had sworn grudging allegiance to France, resented the indemnities Bonaparte had levied and waited for his first reversal in order to reenter the fray.

Bonaparte lifted the siege at Mantua on 31 July, left his siege guns where they were, recalled Augereau from along the Adige, and set off to confront the enemy. Quasdanovich fell at Lonato on 3 August, while Augereau defeated Würmser further north in a series of battles around Castiglione, sending the Austrian commander back toward the safety of the Tyrol in rather a hurry. Augereau had asked Lannes to join him at Castiglione, but the grenadier general never made it past the combat at Lonato. He wrote about the battle to Pouzols and, as usual, exaggerated enemy casualties, credited the Armée d'Italie with a decisive victory—he was right—and dwelt on his exploits. He said he took part in the first day's fighting, the fiercest, naturally, had been captured by the enemy, but secured his release by promising he would not fight the Austrians again. An easy promise to make, because he claimed "the enemy can't continue the war."[30]

The enemy disagreed, and launched a second attempt to relieve Mantua. Würmser left General Karl Davidovich guarding the routes into the Tyrol, fertile source of reinforcements and supplies, and marched down the Brenta valley to attack the French, most of whom he believed still to be bivouacked outside Mantua. Würmser was wrong. The battles of the first days of September—Roveredo, the Brenta valley, and Bassano—were hard-fought conflicts to prevent him from reaching Mantua with his 30,000 troops. Although the Austrians held strong positions and enjoyed numerical superiority, they were consistently outflanked, outmaneuvered, and surprised by the Armée d'Italie, who fought on and on despite its deteriorating condition.

Augereau had moved to Bassano on 5 September, taking Lannes and his 4th grenadier regiment with him. Evidently Lannes thought his pledge not to fight the

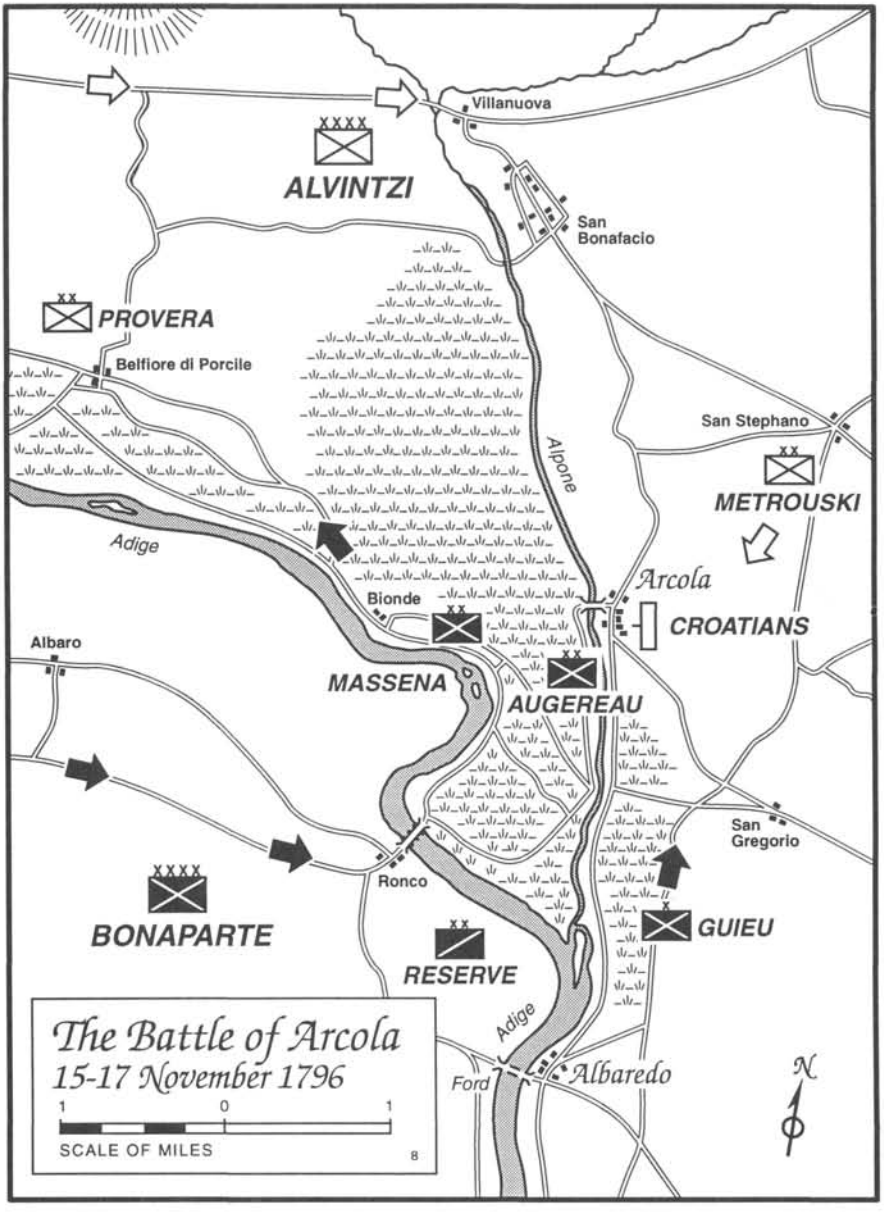
Austrians again was good only through the August campaign. Because this was a new month and a new offensive, all bets were off. His advance-guard encountered an enemy column at Primolano two days later and defeated it. The next day the major Austrian force marched directly between Masséna on the left bank of the Brenta River and Augereau on the right. Lannes's 4th grenadier regiment was the first to charge, followed by several divisions on the double. Lannes captured two enemy standards and was wounded for his efforts. In his somewhat effusive report, Bonaparte reminded the Directory that Lannes had been the first to rout the enemy at Dego, the first to cross the Po at Piacenza, first across the Lodi bridge, and first into Bassano. Praise for such an impressive string of "firsts" made any injury seem inconsequential. It was a minor leg wound in any case; Lannes had stopped long enough for a quick bandage and then limped off after the enemy.[31]

Würmser retired toward Mantua, crossing the Po on 10 September at Porto-Legnano, with Lannes's grenadiers in full pursuit. Augereau's division could not overtake Würmser, however, who hurried through the gates of Mantua. Bonaparte followed him almost to the walls, then decided to attack the suburb of San Giorgio. Würmser obliged and sent a column to San Giorgio on 15 September and ran into General Bon's division and Lannes's grenadier regiment. Supported by Masséna, they repulsed the Austrians, inflicting heavy losses. Bonaparte mentioned to the Directory that Lannes had been wounded again, this time severely enough to require convalescence in Verona. That may well have been his opinion rather than his subordinate's, but he was giving the orders, so Lannes went to Verona.[32]

Forced into idleness, Lannes regaled his friend Pouzols with the glorious aspects of war and made light of its discomforts. If Pouzols believed Lannes's account of the number of prisoners, guns, magazines, flags, supplies, and other paraphernalia of war captured by the Armée d'Italie, with Lannes's help, of course, he might reasonably think the campaign was at a conclusive end. Continuing in his eloquent military style, Lannes claimed the fighting around Mantua had been "the toughest of the whole campaign. I got wounded twice, once in the thigh by a bayonet and again in the leg by a musket ball. I don't know how many men we lost, but it was a lot. I've gotten leave to come home because of my wounds, so I'll see you soon, I hope. I'm *really* tired." Lannes did not go home; instead, he stayed in Verona, billeted in one of the palazzos belonging to the Lombard aristocracy, as were many senior officers in similar shape.[33]

With Würmser barricaded inside Mantua, the Austrian high command selected a new general, Joseph Alvinczy de Berberek, to spearhead the offensive against the French and relieve the city. Alvinczy was the third Austrian commander-in-chief to lead the third Austrian army in the third offensive against the French. Like clockwork, Alvinczy sent his new army down from the Tyrol in two columns. Davidovich with 18,000 troops came out of the Tyrol and down along the Adige River, while Alvinczy led 37,000 men from Frioul toward Vicenza. In contrast, the Armée d'Italie was at an all-time low point. Only 28,000 men were on active duty, with 18,000 unfit for combat. "Reduced to a fraction, the army is utterly exhausted. The heroes of Lodi, Millesimo and Castiglione have either died for their country or are in hospital," Bonaparte complained to the Directory, but those greedy politicians remained unresponsive to his situation.[34]

With or without assistance, the French would have to fight. Bonaparte refused to lift the siege of Mantua, and leaving a small force to guard Verona, he


Villanuova
ALVINTZI
San Bonafacio
PROVERA
Belfiore di Porcile
Alpone
San Stephano
METROUSKI
Adige
Arcola
Bionde
CROATIANS
Albaro
MASSENA
AUGEREAU
San Gregorio
Ronco
BONAPARTE
GUIEU
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Adige
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The Battle of Arcola
15-17 November 1796
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decided to outflank Alvinczy's advance in the marshy area around the village of Arcola between the Adige and Alpone rivers. He left Verona during the night of 14 November, taking Masséna, Augereau, and General Marc-Antoine Beaumont's cavalry with him. He moved off toward Ronco and its large bridge, surprisingly intact, across the Adige. An Austrian battalion at Ronco withdrew toward Arcola as the French advanced. Augereau crossed the Adige with Bon, General Jean-Antoine Verdier, and Lannes. Even after six weeks in Verona, he was still shaky, but as long as his horse was not as lame as he was, he meant to stay with the advance-guard and see what would happen. He got his chance, because once across the Adige the advance-guard encountered the enemy's advance posts and pushed them back to Villanova.[35]

Although Augereau intended to take the bridge across the Alpone, a heavy enemy fusillade from the other end of the bridge stopped him. While Masséna overwhelmed the Austrians upriver at Porcile, Augereau sent Lannes and the 51st grenadier regiment to launch a second assault across the Arcola bridge. Lannes got less than a third of the way over the bridge before he was shot twice. His grenadiers dove behind the safety of the dikes, dragging their wounded general with them. During a break in the firing, several of them carried him to the field hospital at Ronco and left him, unconscious, to the surgeons.[36]

When Alvinczy realized the French action at Arcola was *not* a diversion but a determined effort to outflank his forces, he sent for reinforcements and prepared to redouble his defense. On the 17th, Bonaparte dispatched two demi-brigades to take Arcola from the rear, then he rode that afternoon to the hotly contested bridgehead. He grabbed a flag without wasting time for a motivational speech and started across the bridge. The dispirited troops rallied and followed him, but enemy fire struck the officers close on their commander's heels. An infantry officer flung himself in front of Bonaparte, shouting, "You'll get yourself killed—if you do we're *all* lost. You don't belong here!" The advance halted as the emotional impetus withered under heavy resistance. The troops practically fell over themselves seeking shelter, unceremoniously shoving Bonaparte into the mud next to the bridge. Cheered by the spectacle of so much disorder, the Austrians pressed the attack, crossed the bridge, and advanced toward the dikes.

Two miles away at the field hospital, Lannes had revived enough to hear the firing. Deciding his wounds were not as serious as the army surgeons claimed, he grabbed someone's horse and galloped to Arcola. Dismounting, he commandeered some soldiers lurking behind the dikes and led them onto the bridge. The rest of the troops ran up behind the impromptu advance-guard. The enemy fire continued, and Lannes was knocked unconscious by a musket ball—nothing less would have stopped him. Bonaparte and his generals filled the gaps with reinforcements, but they were beaten back. Masséna later lured the Austrian troops into the swamp before the bridge, ambushed, then overwhelmed them. After three days of brutal fighting, the enemy surrendered Arcola and withdrew.[37]

The victory demonstrated French tenacity in the face of a numerically superior enemy in entrenched positions. The Armée d'Italie won at Arcola at a high cost, with over 3,000 killed and wounded, including every senior officer except for Masséna, Augereau, Guieu, and, of course, Bonaparte himself. Lannes woke up again in time to find that Bonaparte had commended him to the Directory. "At three in the afternoon," Bonaparte wrote, "he was flat on his back in hospital, suffering from two earlier wounds, when he heard that I was leading

another column myself. Because he could not walk, he rode [to Arcola, where] he was hit by a ball that knocked him out." Naturally Bonaparte exaggerated—Lannes heard the firing and, with a reflex worthy of Pavlov's dogs, rode to the sound of the guns. He did not know until he got to Arcola who was leading what column; at that moment nobody was doing much of anything except hiding from enemy fire. Bonaparte's report nevertheless made good copy, and did not hurt Lannes's promotional chances either.[38]

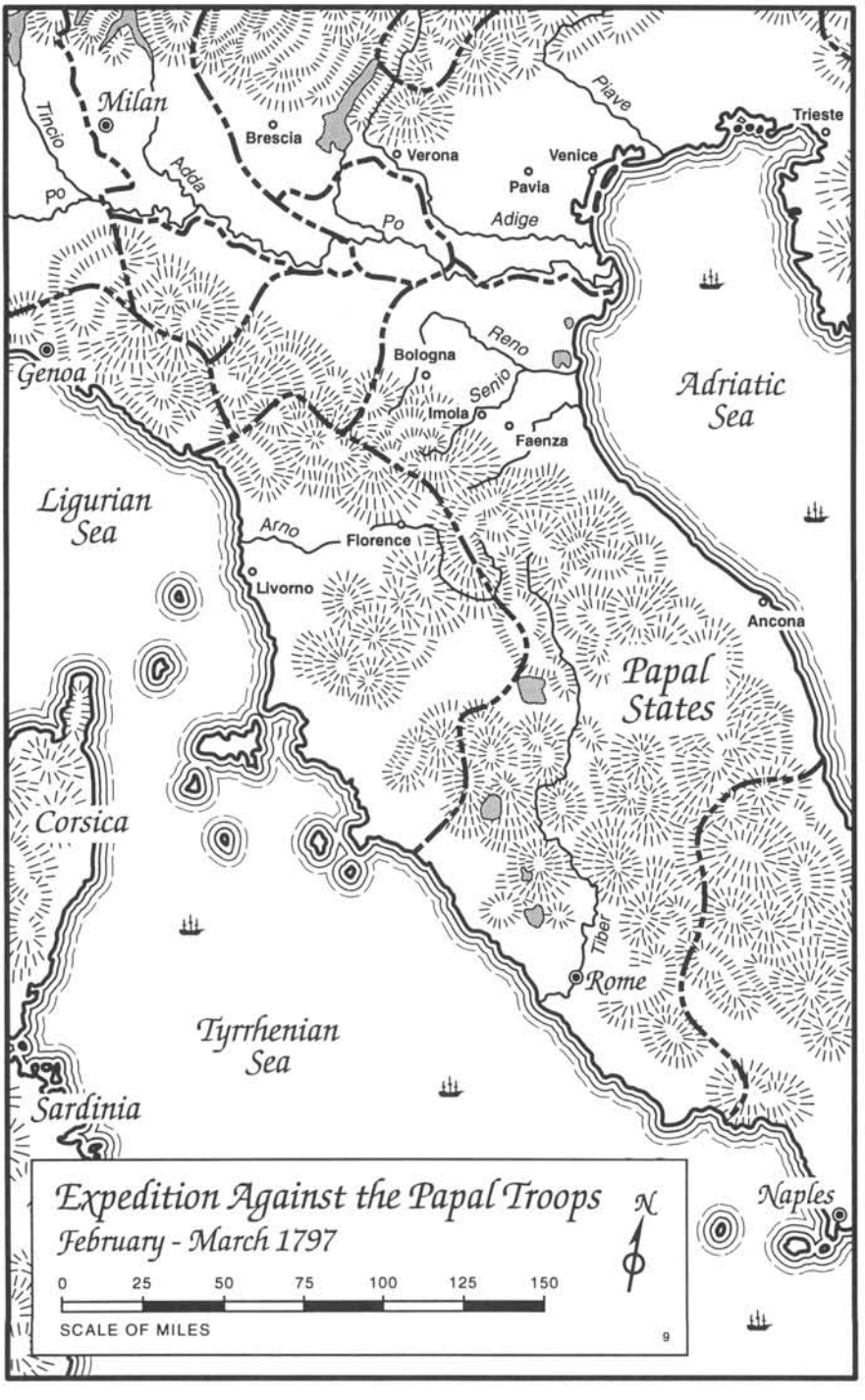
Less than two years later Bonaparte gave Lannes the flag the Directory had presented him to commemorate Arcola. He made quite a public show of it, of course, complete with proclamations, but at least his sentiments were honest. "There was a time on the field of Arcola when the battle's outcome depended on the audacity of its leaders," he declared. "Wounded and covered with blood, you left the hospital determined to win or die. I saw you constantly throughout that day, always in the first ranks of the bravest soldiers, [and] it is you therefore who deserve this honorable flag."[39]

This "honorable flag" unfortunately had a dishonorable career. No one has seen it since the end of the nineteenth century. Half is allegedly tucked away somewhere in the Musée de l'Armée in Paris. Given his descendants' bizarre tendency to misplace, lose, sell, or allege theft of virtually every one of Lannes's possessions, the other half may well have been used by unimpressed housemaids to dust the ducal furniture. Of course, one may wonder why the flag was cut in half in the first place.[40]

Losing the battle but not the war, Alvinczy planned a second offensive to relieve Würmser in Mantua. Before Alvinczy's new army could arrive from the Tyrol, Lannes and the 51st grenadier regiment were ordered to Bologna in December. He had no definite orders until the beginning of the new year, when Bonaparte arrived in Bologna to tell him he would be marching south to engage the papal troops. Alvinczy's advance interrupted Bonaparte's plan, and he sent Lannes north. He left Bologna during the late afternoon of 11 January and marched all night to reach Augereau along the Adige by the next afternoon. Augereau's hasty dispositions separated him from both Bon and Guieu, and he had only Lannes's grenadiers to stop Provera's advance-guard from crossing the Adige. Evidently the Austrians had learned very little from previous experiences; outnumbered and nearly outmaneuvered, Augereau and Lannes managed to stop Provera, who moved upriver to try a crossing at Anghiari.[41]

Augereau sent Lannes after him. After a sharp confrontation, Lannes forced Provera to withdraw toward Mantua, with the rest of Augereau's troops in pursuit until they reached the suburbs. They got no further than La Favorita where Sérurier pinned them down. On the 16th, Augereau and Lannes, seconded by General Léonard Duphot, attacked Provera in the rear as Masséna, arriving by forced marches after his victory at Rivoli on the 14th, reinforced them. Provera surrendered nearly 7,000 men and most of his artillery. Shut up in Mantua since the previous September, Würmser had few supplies and no hope of rescue now. He held out until 2 February and then capitulated.[42]

Lannes returned to Bologna and brought Pouzols up to date, beginning with Arcola and running through La Favorita. "I was ready to leave for Rome with 12,000 troops [he had less than a regiment] when [Bonaparte] ordered me to march back, day and night, because the enemy had just crossed the Adige. When I arrived I decided to attack [and where were Augereau and Masséna?], and


Milan
Tincio
Po
Adda
Brescia
Verona
Venice
Pavia
Piave
Trieste
Po
Adige
Genoa
Bologna
Reno
Senio
Imola
Faenza
Adriatic Sea
Ligurian Sea
Arno
Florence
Livorno
Ancona
Papal States
Corsica
Tiber
Rome
Tyrrhenian Sea
Sardinia
Naples
Expedition Against the Papal Troops
February - March 1797
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0 25 50 75 100 125 150
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captured 3,500 prisoners and 14 guns [by himself?], then pursued 9,000 [Austrians] all the way to Mantua [less than two miles], where they finally surrendered. I'm off to Rome—again—and the first thing I'll do is round up all the pope's soldiers, the cardinals too." Judging from this letter, one might think no one else in the Armée d'Italie had a thing to do with stopping Alvinczy's second offensive, and that the intrepid grenadier general had single-handedly forced Mantua's surrender. In his defense, it must be said that Lannes exaggerated no less than his commander-in-chief, a true master of propaganda and self-aggrandizement.[43]

Although Bonaparte meant to carry the campaign out of northern Italy and into Austria, he first had to secure the army's rear. The most persistent problem in the south was Pius VI, who refused to recognize armistices, surrenders, Austrian losses, or the French presence north of the Papal States. Because he could instigate resistance, Bonaparte knew Pius VI must be neutralized, and created another force at Bologna on 18 January to be commanded by General Claude Victor. Lannes had the advance-guard of two demi-brigades and the newly formed Lombard Legion led by General Lahoz d'Ortitz. Bonaparte instructed Victor and Lannes to march south to the Papal States in an orderly manner, avoiding conflicts with the locals. "You're an army corps, *not* a horde of plunderers," he reminded the two generals.[44]

Lannes seemed an odd choice for the mission, at least as Bonaparte envisioned it. Although he would not plunder or permit his troops to loot their way through the countryside, he would not necessarily march peacefully through villages filled with potential rebels—he would have his sword drawn at the first hint of opposition. He seemed an even odder choice to "persuade" Pius VI to accept the Armistice of Cherasco, given his vehemently anticlerical opinions. On the other hand, perhaps Bonaparte chose him for exactly those reasons.

Marmont went with Lannes and the advance-guard, an eyewitness to a campaign he called "a bit of a grand spectacle." The pope had organized his troops to "chase those proud republicans out of Italy," but military ability was not the Holy Father's strong suit. Even though he did not share Lannes's opinions on upper and lower clergy, Marmont observed that Pius VI, "recalling the military exploits of some of his predecessors, thought he was qualified to imitate them. He forgot, however, that the time [for such exploits] had long since passed."[45]

Lannes and the advance-guard reached the Papal States and the town of Imolda on 1 February. The papal army had taken its position behind the Senio River, between Imolda and Faenza. Lannes crossed the Senio in less than an hour, raced down the road toward Faenza, leaving the Lombard Legion to attack the papal army in the front while he caught them from behind. The confrontation was amazingly brief. The papal forces surrendered, leaving some 1,000 prisoners and all their artillery in French hands, while the cavalry galloped away to inform Pius VI of the defeat.[46]

The forces at Imolda were not the main army, however. Pius VI had employed General Colli to lead 11,000 additional papal troops at Ancona along the Adriatic coast. Lannes knew he could not attack this force with impunity, and spent more than his usual amount of time on appropriate tactical dispositions. Taking a break afterward, he walked along the beach with Marmont, several officers, and a few aides. They ran into 300 cavalrymen commanded by a Roman noble, Bischi, who ordered his men to attack the French at once. In spite of such

favorable odds, Bischi seriously underestimated his adversary. As the papal cavalry drew its swords, Lannes practically threw himself in Bischi's face. "What the hell are you doing with those swords? Put them up immediately!"

"Immediately," Bischi agreed, and ordered his troops to comply. Lannes had not finished. "All of you dismount and follow me!" "At once," the thoroughly cowed nobleman replied as the regiment dismounted and led its horses into the French camp, where they promptly surrendered. Later that evening, Lannes told Marmont, "Y'know, if I'd backed down they'd have killed me for sure—probably the rest of you too. Much better to use audacity and impudence." The staggering odds—300 armed men against eight—would have silenced most commanders, but then most lacked such an amazing combination of nerve and Gascon bravado. Lannes had become d'Artagnan, without most of the rustic bumbling.[47]

The way to Rome was open and Lannes and Victor set off for the Eternal City, which they reached on 22 February. News describing the ease with which they had overcome his troops had already reached Pius VI, who hastily signed the Treaty of Tolentino on the 19th. Victor's corps occupied the city to make sure he respected the treaty. Lannes stayed with Victor for several weeks, unimpressed with Roman ruins and uneasy among so many well-dressed, well-fed clerics. Against his better judgment, he let Victor talk him into attending Ash Wednesday Mass at the Vatican and an audience with Pius VI afterward.

Victor was a model of propriety; Lannes was not. Victor maintained a respectful demeanor at Mass, while Lannes scarcely concealed his scorn for Saint Peter's basilica, the impressive ritual, and the splendidly attired clergy. Victor observed the protocol of papal audiences; Lannes considered Pius VI another enemy he had defeated, and refused to kneel or kiss the papal ring. He shook the pope's hand instead, sending horrified ripples through the assembled religious and diplomatic ranks. Pius VI was lucky; at least Lannes did not address him with republican familiarity or cut loose with his habitual profanity.[48]

After concluding peace at Leoben on 18 April, Bonaparte returned to Milan. He established new and luxurious headquarters at the palazzo of Mombello north of the city. Victor remained in Rome, but Bonaparte sent for Lannes, who was glad to leave Rome until he discovered Mombello was not much fun either. He was required to attend the seemingly endless round of parties, dinners, and balls Bonaparte thought appropriate for his military court. Lannes was not impressed, and complained that he had to be polite for entirely too many days in a row. Small talk drove him crazy, political gossip bored him, the presence of so many elegant ladies scared him, and he wanted to do something else, almost *anything* else.[49]

The "anything else" turned out to be worse than a three-day battle—his wife accused him of infidelity and put him on the defensive, not his normal position. He responded the only way he could, in lengthy, frequent, impassioned, and generally hilarious letters. He did not mean to be funny—he meant to be earnest and, above all, *believed*. Unfortunately, he got carried away, and most of his protestations of faithfulness and undying affection read like a very bad romance novel. Nobody who knew him would ever believe, for instance, that Polette's accusations were enough to deprive him of sleep for five nights running, or make him deathly ill and desperate enough to petition everyone from Bonaparte to the minister of war for leave just so he could come home to her. In each successive letter, the protestations and bad prose escalated; each was signed by a completely faithful and abysmally unhappy husband who was so depressed he could scarcely

write. Anybody who knew Lannes—or knew about him—would spot the presence of a ghostwriter, perhaps on the order of the poetic Albert Permon. Lannes never wrote letters like these before or after; it was patently not his style.[50]

It is interesting to note that each of Lannes's biographers—all of whom have thus far been men—accepted the letters at face value and believed the writer. Even the most recent biography claimed that because he was "so fervent" in defense of his marriage and fidelity, he should not be questioned further. To bolster this remarkably shaky premise, the author stated there was no "proof" of infidelity, and besides, Lannes's "continuous fighting and many wounds" left him little time "to court young Italian girls." He evidently chose to dismiss failed attempts at seduction as entirely beside the point. None of these gentlemen bothered to mention the cliché that the more fervently—and uncharacteristically—one protests, the more he is probably trying to hide.[51]

Whatever the truth might be, at least the letters had the desired effect. Polette packed her bags and headed for Milan the first week in August. She fit right in with the gaiety of Mombello and accepted the gifts her husband gave her with delight and no uncomfortable questions, including "Can you really afford this?" Lannes could, but not from his army pay. Like everyone else he had benefited from certain legal—and illegal—windfalls during the campaign, though he never reached Masséna's league with regard to "acquisitions." He had sent most of the money to Pouzols with instructions to buy property, because another one of Polette's complaints was that she had no house of her own. Peace restored for the moment, the more or less happy couple spent a pleasant two weeks together until Bonaparte decided a few other matters needed attention. Polette went home wearing a rather impressive supply of new jewelry, and apparently no longer worried about the dangers of foreign women.

Bonaparte granted Lannes a reprieve at the end of August, and not a minute too soon. He sent him and his grenadiers to Genoa to guarantee a smooth transition from ancient oligarchic rule to the new Ligurian Republic. The transition went as planned, but Lannes ran into other difficulties almost immediately. His adversary was the French diplomatic representative, Guillaume-Charles Faipoult. The minister's insistence on proper diplomatic conduct conflicted with Lannes's forthright and impetuous personality, and the two men argued. The representative's words were polite though stern, whereas the grenadier general's were profane and loud. Lannes also took exception to Faipoult's meddling in military affairs. "It's none of your damn business how I deploy my troops," he said, "and you sure don't have any right to tell me what to do just because you're scared!" Faipoult complained to Bonaparte, who agreed that his subordinate "was wrong-headed [on this occasion], though [he is] a good, brave boy nevertheless." Bonaparte also said that this "brave boy" had been subsequently instructed in the proper respect and conduct owed to the French Republic's diplomatic representatives. If so, the lesson did not sink in. Lannes would never learn the art of finesse nor respect for professional diplomats. Instead, he kept his "in your face" methods of dealing with these individuals intact, with results ranging from the hilarious to the amazingly effective.[52]

Lannes went to Marseille in mid-September with his much-traveled grenadiers to put down a resurgence of royalist agitation. As soon as he passed the city gates, he made sure everyone knew exactly why he was there—"Royalists, I'm here today; you're dead tomorrow." The resistance evaporated before any

"traitor" lost his or her life, but Lannes stayed to make sure peaceful and firm republican sentiments prevailed until Bonaparte recalled him to Mombello on 7 October.[53]

A month after the Treaty of Campo-Formio on 17 October, Bonaparte left Milan. He traveled to Rastadt for further negotiations and took Lannes with him, not, presumably, for his diplomatic expertise. When Bonaparte left for Paris the end of November, Lannes went home to Lectoure. He was more than glad to go. There was the dubious marital relationship to patch up, more property to buy, his sister's wedding to attend—and pay for—and friends to see. There was also the adolescent desire to show off new uniforms and brag about the many wounds that had, in part, earned him his general's rank. Friends and family did not seem to mind the bragging, especially when he accompanied it with prodigious spending on their behalf. Besides, everyone agreed, he was so much fun to be around.

NOTES

1. Service historique, Armée des Alpes et d'Italie, Registre de correspondance, Schérer to the Executive Directory, 18 November 1795, Carton B^{3*} 117^{*}; André Masséna, *Mémoires d'André Masséna, duc de Rivoli, prince d'Essling, maréchal d'Empire, rédigés d'après les documents qu'il a laissés et sur ceux du dépôt de la guerre et du dépôt des fortifications, recueillis par le général Koch*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1966), I, 296–97.

2. Général François Roguet, *Mémoires militaires*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1862–1865), I, 197–98; Service historique, Armée des Alpes et d'Italie, Registre de correspondance, Schérer to Kellermann, 27 October 1795, Carton B^{3*} 117^{*}.

3. Service historique, Armée d'Italie, Correspondance du général de division Augereau, Augereau to Schérer, 30 November 1795, Carton B^{3*} 198^{*}.

4. Service historique, dossier du maréchal Lannes, Carton MF^{2} 10.

5. See Augereau's classic quote from his initial meeting with Bonaparte, when Masséna, Sérurier, and Laharpe were also present: "That little rascal of a general almost scared me!" Couturaud, *Augereau*, 41. For Bonaparte's equally famous speech to his troops and his report on the army's condition, see Napoleon Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier, publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III* (Paris, 1858–1870), No. 91, Proclamation, 27 March 1796, I, 118; No. 94, Bonaparte to the Executive Directory, 28 March 1796, I, 120–22.

6. Service historique, Ordres de bataille, March–April 1976, Carton X^{P} 3; Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 19–20; Service historique, Armée d'Italie, Situations, April 1796, Carton B^{3} 352.

7. Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 21; Auguste-Frédéric-Louis Viesse de Marmont, duc de Raguse, *Mémoires du maréchal Marmont, duc de Raguse, de 1792 à 1841, imprimés sur le manuscrit original de l'auteur*, 9 vols. 2nd ed. (Paris, 1857), I, 156; R.-J. de Pommereue, *Campagne du général Buonaparte en Italie pendant les années IVe et Ve de la République française, par un officier général* (Paris, 1797), 4; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 148, Bonaparte to the Executive Directory, 14 April 1796, I, 161–62.

8. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Note historique et itinéraire de la campagne d'Italie, 1796–1797, Carton MR 427; Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 30.

9. Pommereue, *Campagne du général Buonaparte*, 7–8.

10. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, Carton MR 427.

11. Thoumas claimed historians and biographers unanimously agreed that Bonaparte "discovered" Lannes at Dego. He also pointed out that Napoleon's recall at Saint Helena concerning this event was less than accurate. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 13. The emperor later claimed that Lannes was just a *chef de bataillon* at Dego, and he promoted him to *chef de brigade*, or colonel, after the battle. Lannes's service record shows that he had been a grenadier colonel since 1793. See Service historique, dossier du maréchal Lannes, Carton MF^2 10. M. Turpin, chef de Section aux Archives du dépôt de la guerre went to considerable lengths in 1866 to straighten out the controversy over who got what demi-brigade. He prepared a two-page discourse, with appropriate citations, now in Lannes's dossier. Bonaparte's original intentions are found in the order of 15 April, with Junot's numerical transpositions clearly shown. See *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 165, Bonaparte to the Directory, 15 April 1796, I, 173; Service historique, Ordres de bataille, 1796, Carton X^P 3.

12. Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 54–57, 59–60; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, Carton MR 427; Marmont, *Mémoires*, I, 172.

13. Pommereue, *Campagne du général Buonaparte*, 22; J. Chanut, *Campagne d'Italie par Bonaparte, avril 1796–octobre 1797, par un officier de la 32e demi-brigade* (Paris, 1832), 25.

14. Emmanuel Las Cases, *Memoirs of the Life, Exile, and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon*, 4 vols. (London, 1836), I, 251.

15. Service historique, Ordres de bataille, 1796, Carton X^P 3; Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 62–63.

16. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, Carton MR 427.

17. Pommereue, *Campagne du général Buonaparte*, 25–27; Charles-Pierre Griois. *Mémoires du général Griois 1792–1822*. 4 vols. (Paris, 1909), I, 34.

18. Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 65–72; Service historique, Ordres de bataille, 1796, Carton X^P 3.

19. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 536, Bonaparte to the Executive Directory, 1 June 1796, I, 420; Chanut, *Campagne d'Italie*, 31–32.

20. Luc Willette, *Le Marechal Lannes, un d'Artagnan sous l'Empire* (Paris, 1979), 44–5; J. Gros, "Lettres inédites du maréchal Lannes," *La Révolution française* 38 (1900):72. Gros's article included six letters, five of which Lannes wrote during the first Italian campaign. Like so many others who have contemplated Lannes's correspondence, Gros bemoaned the "positively fanciful" spelling, the arcane capitalization, and the predilection for semicolons to string together lengthy sentences. Gros did not reproduce either Lannes's spelling or punctuation, to spare readers, as he claimed, which is unfortunate. The present whereabouts of these letters remains a mystery, and few biographers cited them. Lannes also never understood the difference between the Vendéans and the Chouans of Normandy. To him, one rebel group was the same as another, and he habitually referred to all of them as "Chouans."

21. Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 73–74. Precise numbers of the rebels executed are not available. Estimates range from twenty to a hundred. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, Carton MR 427.

22. Jean Thiry, *Bonaparte en Italie 1796–1797* (Paris, 1973), 137; Service historique, dossier du maréchal Lannes, Carton MF^2 10. The Directory did not confirm the promotion until February 1797.

23. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 529, Bonaparte to Lannes, 30 May 1796, I, 415.

24. Ibid., No. 597, Bonaparte to Lannes, 9 June 1796, I, 470. It was obvious that Lannes was becoming *very* good at these kinds of special missions. Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 59.

25. Gros, "Lettres inédites," 67.

26. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 63.

27. Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 60; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 24.

28. Junot, II, 101–4.

29. Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 196.

30. Gros, "Lettres inédites," 69. See also Chanut, *Campagne d'Italie*, 41–42.

31. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 978, Bonaparte to the Directory, 9 September 1796, I, 756–58.

32. Couturaud, *Augereau*, 52; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, Carton MR 427; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 1000, Bonaparte to the Directory, 16 September 1796, I, 776–77. Phipps said that Lannes was wounded at Bassano [he was], went to Milan, and did not return to the army until Arcola. Laffargue, usually so precise, agreed. See Phipps, *Armies*, IV, 104; Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 61. However Lannes's correspondence from this period is from Verona, not Milan.

33. Gros, "Lettres inédites," 70–71.

34. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 1182, Bonaparte to the Executive Directory, 13 November 1796, II, 136–40; Service historique, Armée d'Italie, Situations, October 1796, Carton B^3 355.

35. Marmont, *Mémoires*, I, 236–37.

36. Service historique, Armée d'Italie, Registre des situations/rapports de la division Augereau [adjutant-général Belliard], November 1796, Carton B^{3*} 209*.

37. Marmont, *Mémoires*, I, 238–39.

38. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, MR 427; Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 255; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 1197, Bonaparte to Carnot, 19 November 1796, II, 147.

39. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 2413, Bonaparte to Lannes, 6 February 1798, III, 639–40.

40. See Thoumas, *Lannes*, 29; Lannes, *Maréchal Lannes*, 27; Damamme, *Lannes*, 334, n. 34.

41. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 1317, Bonaparte to Berthier, 26 December 1796, II, 258; Masséna, *Mémoires*, II, 282–84.

42. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, Carton MR 427.

43. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 1389, Bonaparte to Lannes, 15 January 1797, II, 315; Gros, "Lettres inédites," 71–72.

44. The advance-guard was composed of the 5th *Légère* regiment, the 19th Line demi-brigade, and two squadrons of the 7th Hussars. See Service historique, Mémoires

reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, Carton MR 427; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 1423, Bonaparte to Victor, 26 January 1797, II, 358.

45. Marmont, *Mémoires*, I, 258; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, Carton MR 427.

46. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Campagne d'Italie, Carton MR 427; Chanut, *Campagne d'Italie*, 67–68.

47. Marmont, *Mémoires*, I, 260.

48. See France, Archives nationales, (hereafter cited as Archives nationales), Correspondance, Relations extérieurs, Extrait d'une dépêche du Citoyen Cacault, 22 July 1797, Carton AF^III^ 77, dossier 320, plaquet 2, 30; Louis Desaix, "Notes de voyage du général Desaix, Suisse et Italie," *Carnet de la Sabretache* 6 (1898):707; Marmont, *Mémoires*, I, 260.

49. Louis-Antoine-Fauvelet de Bourrienne, *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, ed. R. W. Phipps, 4 vols. (New York, 1905), I, 63; Marmont, *Mémoires*, I, 282–84.

50. Henri Sales, "Le divorce du maréchal Lannes," *Publication du bi-centenaire de la naissance du maréchal Lannes* (Auch, 1969), 45–49.

51. Ronald Zins, *Le maréchal Lannes, favori de Napoléon* (Paris, 1994), 295.

52. Archives nationales, MSS, Papiers de Guillaume-Charles Faipoult. Mission auprès de la République de Gênes du ministre Faipoult 1793–1800, Bonaparte to Faipoult, 20 September 1797, Carton AP 186, dossier 2; Archives Départementales de Auch, dossier du maréchal Lannes, Lannes to Faipoult, 14 December 1797.

53. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 2187, Bonaparte to General Dessolle, 12 September 1797, III, 384–85; No. 2293, Bonaparte to Berthier, 7 October 1797, III, 491–92; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 33.

Chapter 3

Crocodiles Fighting in the Reeds: L'Armée d'Orient, 1798–1799

I never imagined we would experience all the misfortunes and sufferings a man can endure without actually dying!

—François Bernoyer

After a month of Paris salons and Directory machinations for Bonaparte and impressing friends and acquaintances for Lannes, both generals were bored. In retrospect, the Italian campaign with its balance of privations and glory must have seemed wonderful. Bonaparte in particular needed another project. The idea of invading England, the one enemy who stubbornly remained out of reach, appealed to him. At the end of January 1798, he decided to inspect French coastal forces and evaluate the feasibility of invasion. He left Paris on 9 February for an eight-day reconnaissance jaunt, taking his aide Joseph Sulkowski, his secretary Louis-Antoine Bourrienne, and Lannes with him in a large carriage. They surveyed the long coast from the island of Walcheren to the north and down to Boulogne, and returned to Paris discouraged about the prospects of actually reaching England.[1]

Bonaparte knew he could not overcome the French navy's deficiencies or the British fleet's obvious superiority. Although the Armée d'Angleterre was large enough, it would do him no good stranded on the French side of the Channel. In lieu of direct assault, he considered the oblique approach of striking from the east. Minister of Foreign Affairs Charles-Maurice Talleyrand assisted Bonaparte in convincing the Directory that an expedition to Egypt had merit. In his usual efficient manner, Bonaparte drafted a proposal for the expedition, including the forces he would need—25,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry. Once assembled, the troops would embark from Genoa, Civita-Vecchia, Corsica, Marseille, Toulon, and Nice by the end of May or the first week of June. Everything was planned in secrecy for several weeks, an amazing feat considering the complicated logistics. According to Joseph Bonaparte, "the Egyptian expedition was a secret about which the public knew nothing. [My brother] agreed to lead it only if the

Directory would give him everything he asked for in order to guarantee its success."[2]

Although several Directors were willing to send a popular and successful general as far from France as possible, the government waited until 12 April to issue the decree creating the Armée d'Orient. Bonaparte did not wait for the formalities; he had already selected the generals and staff to accompany him. Most, including Lannes, came from the Armée d'Italie, the "most energetic, adventurous, loyal and youthful men" who had shared his victories. Though only these senior officers knew the details, everybody else speculated endlessly and imaginatively. Some said they were headed for Portugal, others thought somewhere in the east, even more were convinced they were going to Malta. One officer who actually knew what was what admired "the total secrecy of the preparations and the audacity of [Bonaparte's] enterprise," whereas another less enchanted officer claimed, "Bonaparte adopted the air of a high priest who alone has the key to a profound mystery. He exercised great power over everything to do with the expedition, accepting, rejecting, and choosing his followers: republican or royalist, aristocrat or Jacobin—all were the same to him as long as they served his goals." The newspapers assisted with the deception. *Le Moniteur* reported an invasion of England, and the *Surveillant* mentioned that several generals, among them Lannes and General Victor-Emmanuel Leclerc, were leaving for Toulon to ready a "little flotilla," but gave no reason for the preparations and no destination for the ships.[3]

On 14 March, Bonaparte ordered Lannes and Adjutant-general Lagrange to reach Lyon as soon as possible. Although he carried ultimate authority, Lannes was expected to coordinate logistics with the Lyon military commandant and army commissaires. He requisitioned boats to transport troops arriving from Switzerland down the Rhône and stockpiled everything from shoes to ammunition. Because most of the troops had not been paid for some time, he had to find enough money to settle accounts. He also supervised the arrival of 3 million francs appropriated in Switzerland by General Guillaume Brune to finance the expedition. Bonaparte insisted that Lannes report "everything in the greatest detail," from morale among the demi-brigades to the exact day the soldiers were paid.[4]

Lannes expected the troops to arrive by the third week of March and to have the supplies ready for them. He was wrong on both counts. Although the boats waited at the docks, no supplies had reached Lyon. He dispatched couriers after them, and informed the Directory on 20 March that he had expedited everything he could. In a burst of optimism, he swore everything would be ready on time. This time he was right. He had followed Bonaparte's orders, but made his own decisions regarding clothing, ammunition, food, and money. There was not enough to pay everyone, and he ran into trouble with the 4th horse artillery battalion the night before its departure. The commander insisted his troops were going nowhere until each man had been paid. Having indulged in the plentiful Lyonnaise wines, the men were drunk, belligerent, and insubordinate. Lannes overlooked their behavior for the moment and ordered them paid at eight the next morning. Still suffering from the previous night's excesses, they took their pay

but refused to budge. Lannes lost his patience and threatened them with grave bodily harm if they did not stagger onto their ship immediately. He saw the last of them by two that afternoon.[5]

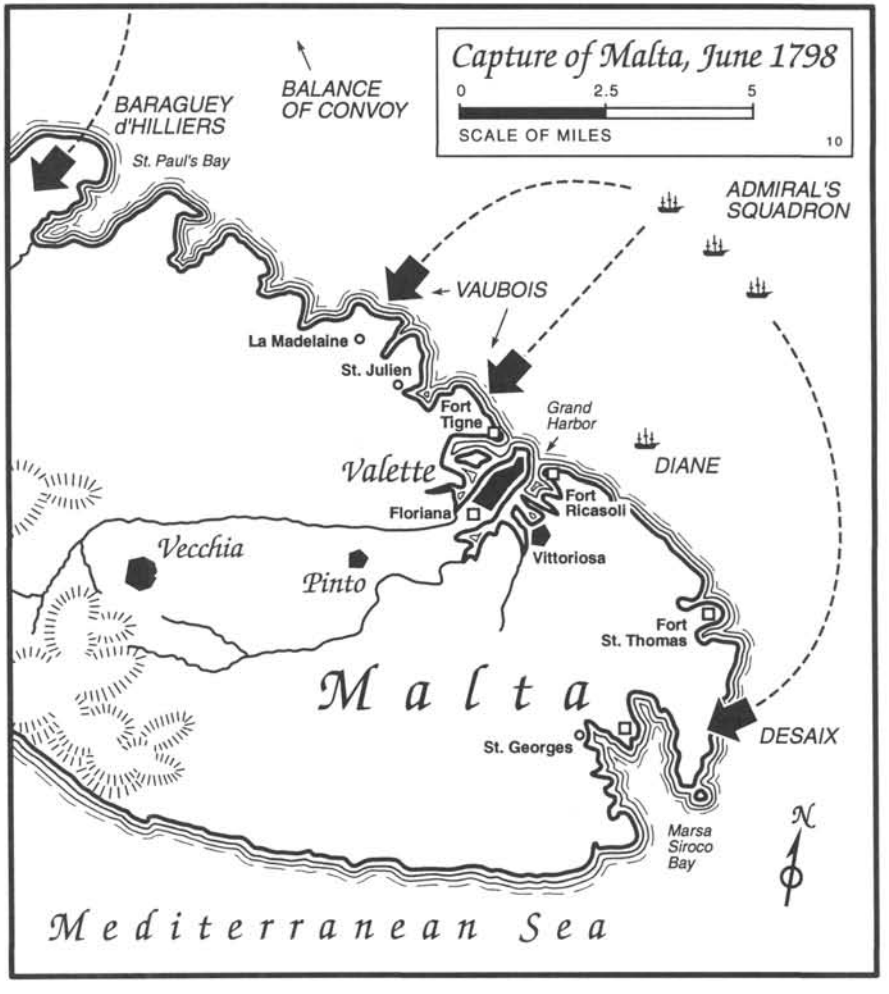
The 3 million francs worried Bonaparte more than troops and supplies; without it no one was going anywhere. Writing to Lannes on 17 April, he said it would arrive in Lyon within two days at the latest, then added, "You don't sleep until it's reached Toulon." When the money arrived in Lyon more or less on schedule, Lannes sailed with it down the Rhône. Once it was delivered safely he could sleep, but he rode instead from Avignon to Marseille for his next orders.[6]

The massive fleet assembled in Toulon harbor. Three hundred transport ships had room for 30,000 troops with arms, several hundred horses, and sufficient supplies. Fifty-six warships prepared to sail as escorts. This "immense flotilla, such as had never before been seen in the Mediterranean," was sent on its way at 7:30 in the evening of 18 May to the cheers of crowds and bands along the quays.[7]

Like most of the officers on the *L'Orient*, Lannes had expected a pleasure cruise with an exciting adventure at the end. Like most officers he lost his optimism during a protracted wait off Sardinia for the fleet sailing from Civita Vecchia. While the ships rode at anchor, the fresh provisions spoiled and the drinking water evaporated. Cramped and uncomfortable, officers and men became irritable, bored, and critical as the "pleasure cruise" degenerated into a lengthy bout of seasickness. Lannes was as ill—and ill tempered—as the rest. He complained but not yet where Bonaparte could hear him.

In spite of the unpleasant conditions, Bonaparte maintained strict military discipline. One observer noted that the commander seemed like "a *grand seigneur* in the middle of a Spartan military camp." There were a few diversions, however, particularly the evening meetings of the savants who would later organize the *Institut d'Égypte*. Bonaparte took these meetings seriously and made his generals and staff attend. He could not always control such a diverse crowd, however. Several officers were unimpressed and obviously bored with scholarly discussions. A participant claimed Lannes and Junot were the worst behaved, joking with each other and making rude remarks while the savants attempted to educate them. Junot would deliberately mispronounce Lannes's name as one of his better jokes, calling him *l'âne*, or ass. Lannes told Bonaparte that nobody could hear the scholars over Junot's snores rumbling from the back of the crowded gathering. Bonaparte excused Junot from further sessions, but he made Lannes stay, fidgety, bored, with no one to listen to his sotto voce comments.[8]

Antoine-Victor Arnault, an intellectual with some military experience, thought Lannes's attitude was amusing. Arnault knew Lannes did not think much of the savants, believing they took up space better occupied by soldiers and ammunition, and was motivated, in part, by jealousy of Bonaparte's partiality for intellectuals. He remembered when they were introduced. "[M. Arnault] is a man of letters," Berthier explained, but did not bother expounding on Lannes's credentials. Unimpressed with men of letters, Lannes commented on Arnault's future with the expedition had he been running things. "None of you fools would spend a single night under the same roof with me—I'd have fifty grenadiers toss you overboard." "Fifty's a lot against one man, even if he's just a savant,"


Capture of Malta, June 1798
0
2.5
5
SCALE OF MILES
10
BARAGUEY d'HILLIERS
St. Paul's Bay
BALANCE OF CONVOY
ADMIRAL'S SQUADRON
VAUBOIS
La Madelaine
St. Julien
Fort Tigne
Grand Harbor
DIANE
Valette
Floriana
Fort Ricasoli
Vittoriosa
Vecchia
Pinto
Fort St. Thomas
Malta
St. Georges
DESAIX
Marsa Siroco Bay
N
Mediterranean Sea

Arnault said. "More honor for you, general, if you did it yourself. Even so, it wouldn't be your best victory—Arcola suited you better." When Berthier told Lannes that Arnault had been with the army during the Italian campaign, he changed his mind. "That's different—glad to meet you," Lannes said to the bemused Arnault, and shook hands.[9]

When the fleet anchored off Malta on 9 June, Bonaparte sent an envoy to request pro forma permission to land from the Knights of Saint John. The grand master refused, citing ancient laws prohibiting more than two foreign vessels in its ports at a time. With considerably more than two ships, needing water and other supplies, Bonaparte ignored the grand master. He ordered General Charles-Henri Vaubois to land at two the next morning and secure the Maltese coast from the cove at Saint-Julien down to Saint-Georges. Under Vaubois' command, Marmont and Lannes disembarked with seven infantry battalions, cleared out 1,200 local militia, and secured the coast, all before the sun rose.[10]

The fort of Saint-Catherine was the last obstacle, and Bonaparte thought it might be lightly defended. According to Arnault, he told his generals to avoid unnecessary force, because merely surrounding the fort with their troops ought to persuade the garrison to capitulate. Although Vaubois was doubtless willing to follow Bonaparte's orders, Lannes evidently was not. He believed he deserved the chance to capture a fort after weeks of seasickness, bad food, and too many intellectuals. Carried away by an almost gleeful desire to shoot somebody, he led his troops up to the ramparts and opened fire. The startled garrison fired back, then the two sides settled down to a steady exchange of volleys. The French won, mostly because Vaubois sent in the rest of the infantry, and the fort capitulated in less than two hours. Bonaparte was not pleased when he heard about Lannes's precipitous assault; he ordered him back to the ship on the double. Arnault said Bonaparte was furious with his subordinate and did not care who knew it. "You damn Gascon! What the hell were you doing—trying to prove you're so damn brave when we already know that? No—you were out there risking your men and yourself for no bloody reason! You'd do better to follow your orders from now on. When I want you to get yourself killed I'll let you know!"[11]

With Malta secure the rest of the troops were impatient to disembark. Bonaparte refused, preferring to let the situation settle down first, and kept the disappointed soldiers aboard their ships. Deciding the order did not apply to him in spite of Bonaparte's recent and public reprimand, Lannes snared a dinghy and took his aide, Subervie, and two *commissaires de guerre*, Duval and Thévenin, with him. At the last minute, François Bernoyer, the *chef de l'atelier d'habillement*, scrambled in the dinghy. Although Lannes claimed he wanted to inspect the redoubts at Saint-Catherine, it is more likely he was looking for any excuse to escape the ship. He and his partners in crime got more than they expected. On the way to the fort, they encountered an excited Maltese who complained that some renegade French soldiers were headed toward a convent. Lannes followed the peasant, where he found a dozen or so soldiers ransacking the buildings and terrorizing the hapless sisters. Furious, he yelled at them to stop or he would shoot them. Caught off guard, the soldiers left, muttering threats about returning. Lannes ignored them and sent Subervie for some troops to guard the

convent against further depredations.

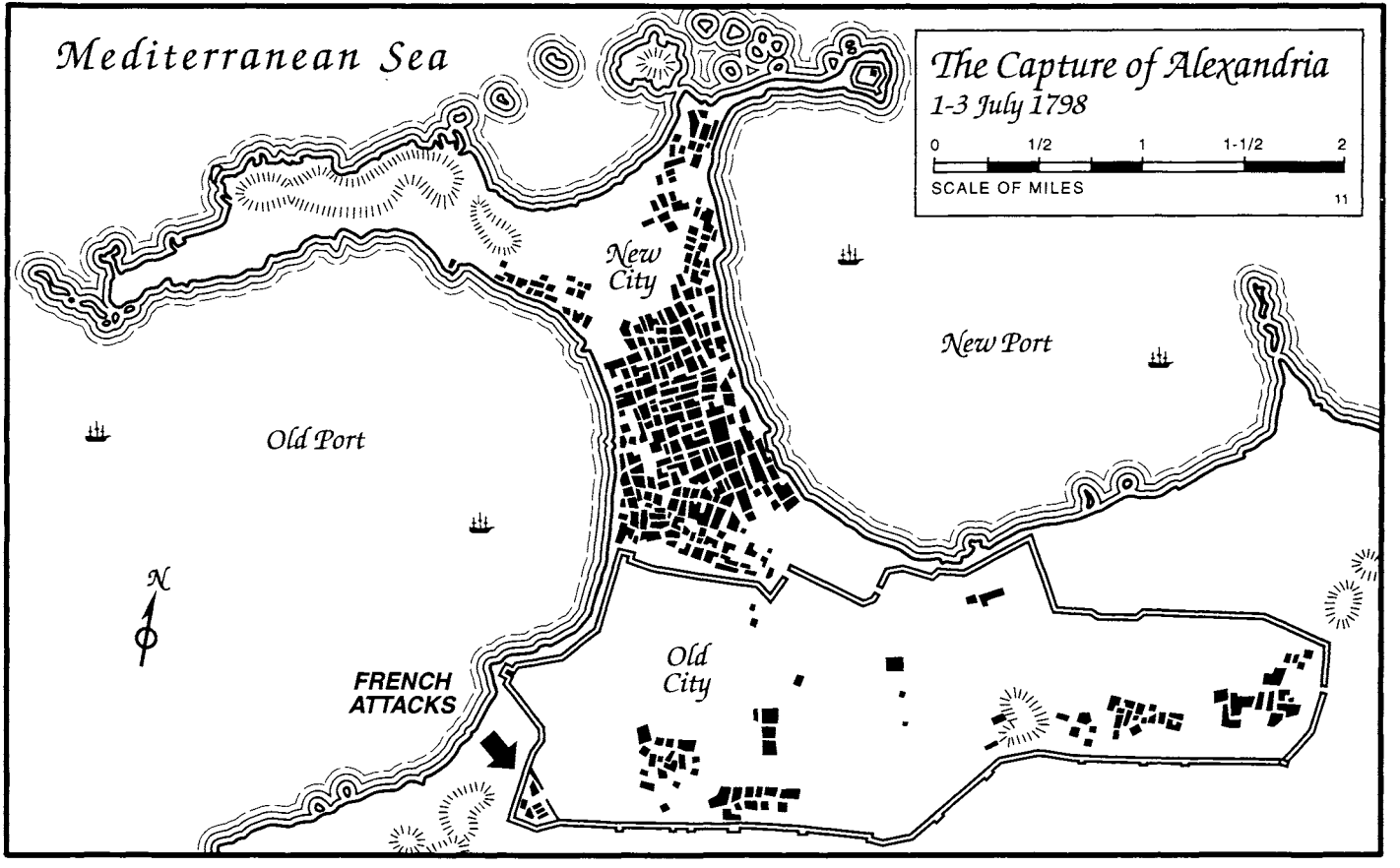
The afternoon wore on, Subervie had not returned, and Lannes wanted to leave. The nuns, still frightened, begged him to stay. Despite his often-voiced opinion concerning church and clergy, he could not disregard their pleas. He and his three companions spent the rest of the afternoon drinking Malaga wine and eating biscuits served by the grateful sisters. To make conversation, the general, borderline agnostic though he was, asked the Mother Superior about the history and customs of her order. By seven that night neither Subervie nor the guard had arrived, and Lannes ran out of suitable topics of conversation. He also worried about possible recriminations arising from his illegal excursion. Oblivious to his concerns and grateful he was still there, the Mother Superior ordered dinner and rooms for the night.

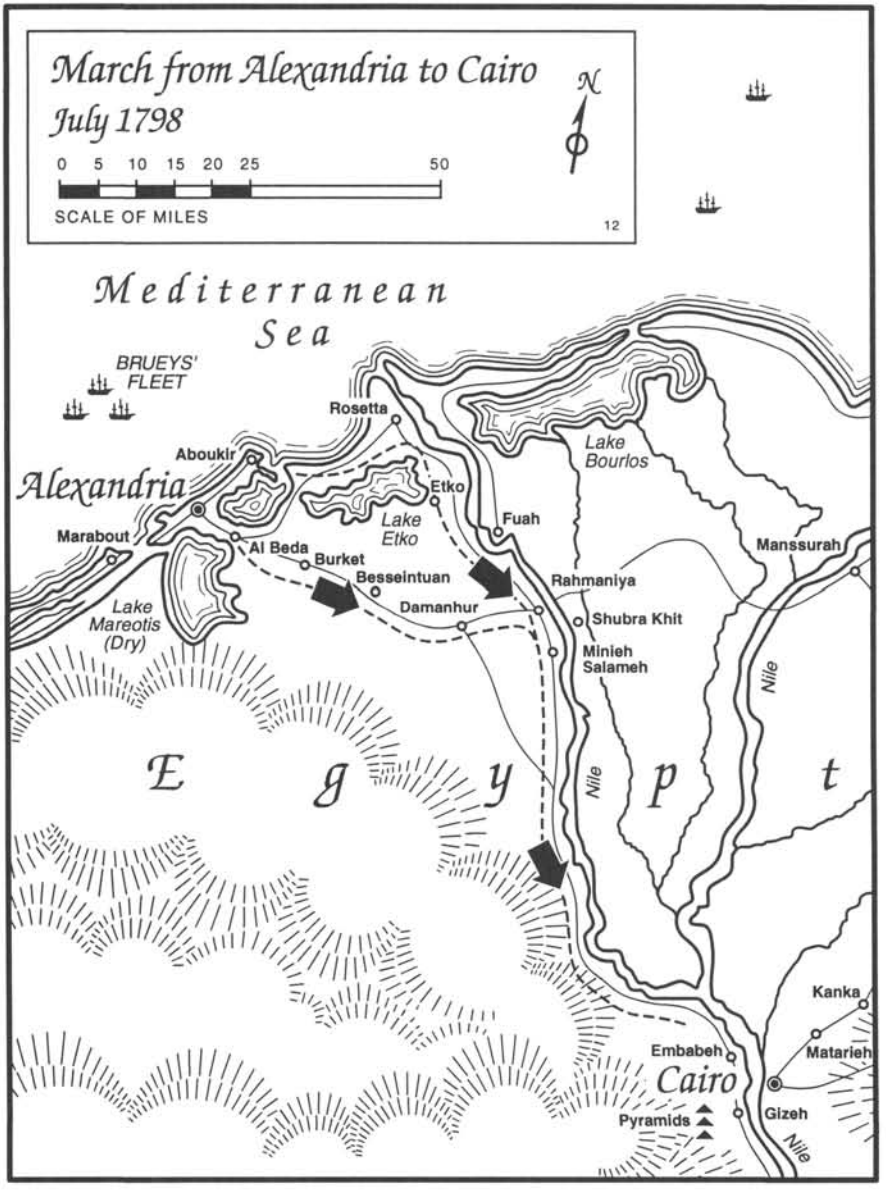
Before the food was served, the plunderers returned with a few new companions. The ringleader was particularly insolent, swearing that they would take what they liked when they liked, and there was nothing Lannes could do about it. Without a word, unusual for the circumstances, Lannes drew his sword while the nuns fled from the Mother Superior's sedate parlor. He seemed perfectly willing to take on the renegades by himself, but Subervie and his hastily assembled guard arrived in time to prevent their general's probable demise.

With the convent under guard, Lannes and his companions hurried back to the ship. Because Berthier had informers scattered throughout the army, Lannes spent an hour or two trying to justify himself to the chief of staff. Although there is no evidence that Bonaparte castigated his subordinate for disregarding an order, the pillagers were court-martialed immediately. Although four were condemned to be shot, Bonaparte commuted the sentence for three of them but he ordered the ringleader to be executed publicly for his flagrant disregard of Lannes's authority.[12]

Clearly outmatched, the grand master surrendered Malta and signed the articles of capitulation on the *L'Orient* on 12 June. Two days later, Bonaparte ordered Lannes to review the grand master's troops before the fleet sailed. After a rough crossing through heavy fog, dodging Admiral Horatio Nelson and the British fleet, Bonaparte's expedition dropped anchor off Alexandria on 1 July. Rocks, reefs, and high waves delayed landing attempts until eight that night. The first troops disembarked, leaving supplies, artillery, and horses behind until the sea calmed. Shortly after three in the morning, Bonaparte led Generals Bon, Jacques Menou, and Jean-Baptiste Kléber, with Lannes and the 75th demi-brigade, toward Alexandria. They marched across a narrow five-mile long levee—less than a quarter-mile wide in some places—with the Mediterranean to the left and the large Nile Delta lakes on the right.[13]

Resistance appeared strong at first; the enemy meant to defend Alexandria from behind its ancient walls. Bonaparte ordered Lannes to lead the assault, but warned him to stop at the new part of the city if the enemy was too numerous. When he got there, he did not think much of the defense; the 75th demi-brigade scaled the walls, attacked the defenders in the streets, and in less than an hour held most of the city. Afterward Lannes reported, "[the enemy was] in such a hurry they scrambled over the walls just to get away. Two [of my] soldiers especially


Mediterranean Sea
The Capture of Alexandria
1-3 July 1798
0 1/2 1 1-1/2 2
SCALE OF MILES
11
New City
New Port
Old Port
Old City
FRENCH ATTACKS
N


March from Alexandria to Cairo
July 1798
0 5 10 15 20 25 50
SCALE OF MILES
12
N
Mediterranean Sea
BRUEYS' FLEET
Rosetta
Aboukir
Alexandria
Marabout
Etko
Lake Etko
Lake Bourlos
Fuah
Manssurah
Al Beda
Burket
Besseintuan
Damanhur
Rahmaniya
Shubra Khit
Minieh Salameh
Lake Mareotis (Dry)
Nile
Egypt
Kanka
Matarieh
Embabeh
Cairo
Pyramids
Gizeh
Nile

distinguished themselves, capturing an enemy flag in spite of a terrible fusillade." The resistance ended when Bonaparte proposed a cease-fire, promising to respect Mameluke dominion in Egypt and the Islamic faith. He named Kléber governor of Alexandria and transferred Lannes to an infantry brigade in General Honoré Vial's division.[14]

The army unloaded its supplies in Alexandria for the next three weeks while Bonaparte planned the next stage of operations. Visitors from France also arrived, including General Robert Lanusse and Jean-Lambert Tallien, representing the Directory. Kléber exercised his function as governor and invited them for dinner. He went beyond his official role by sharing gossip and grievances, mostly his own. During a lengthy dinner on 26 July, Kléber expressed his opinion that the Armée d'Orient was expendable and abandoned, with no feasible way to get supplies and reinforcements. He criticized the Directory's tendency to ignore its best generals or conveniently relegate them to backwater theaters; he thought Lannes was a good example of the latter. By the time of Kléber's dinner, however, Lannes was an example in absentia, far away in the desert on his uncomfortable way to Cairo.[15]

Bonaparte evaluated two routes to Cairo. Having spent more time in Alexandria than he had planned, he chose the shortest but most difficult route. Crossing a forty-five-mile stretch of desert with few villages and almost no oases, the army would have almost no chance of finding food and water. The Nile was also at its lowest annual level, with the cisterns probably dry. Regardless of the hazardous prospect, Bonaparte issued detailed orders through Berthier. Desaix led the advance-guard, followed by generals Jean-Louis Reynier and Bon. With Vial's division, Lannes and Joachim Murat's two cavalry brigades formed the rear-guard and left Alexandria the morning of 6 July.[16]

Marching through a hostile, unfamiliar landscape, with an enemy used to it on their heels, the troops knew they were in for a hard time. One soldier wrote in his journal that "Berthier's precise orders lasted just two miles outside Alexandria. By ten o'clock the heat was so intense that thirst was unquenchable, and men began to collapse at every step, rejoining their units when they regained their strength." Lannes and the rear-guard suffered because the advance-guard had confiscated any food and water in the miserable villages. Though everyone had been issued enough provisions for a four days' march, many had foolishly discarded the biscuits before the first stop, sure they would find better and fresher provisions. They were wrong, but blamed their generals. Some thought it was all Bonaparte's fault. "Each soldier had been issued just one canteen when he left Alexandria," one parched and weary soldier recalled. "Bonaparte is responsible for this negligence. If he was afraid the distribution of canteens would betray our destination, then [he] should have waited until we were ready to leave and given them out then, full of water. The same lack of foresight is the same in all cases, [and] we were out of bread within a week."[17]

Heat, thirst, hunger, freezing nights and maddening mirages generated loud complaints throughout the ranks. Even generals gave in to despair and recriminations. Bourrienne wrote, somewhat sourly, "the illusion of the expedition has disappeared, while its harsh reality remains." Lannes, Murat, and

Alexandre Dumas, all volatile southerners, were the most vocal senior officers. They swore they had been sacrificed, and Bonaparte was the Directory's dupe, led astray like a child. The idea of being sacrificed aggravated Lannes so much that at one point he tossed his hat onto the hot sands and stomped on it amid fierce profanity. He did not remember his initial enthusiasm for the expedition; at this point, he hated it.[18]

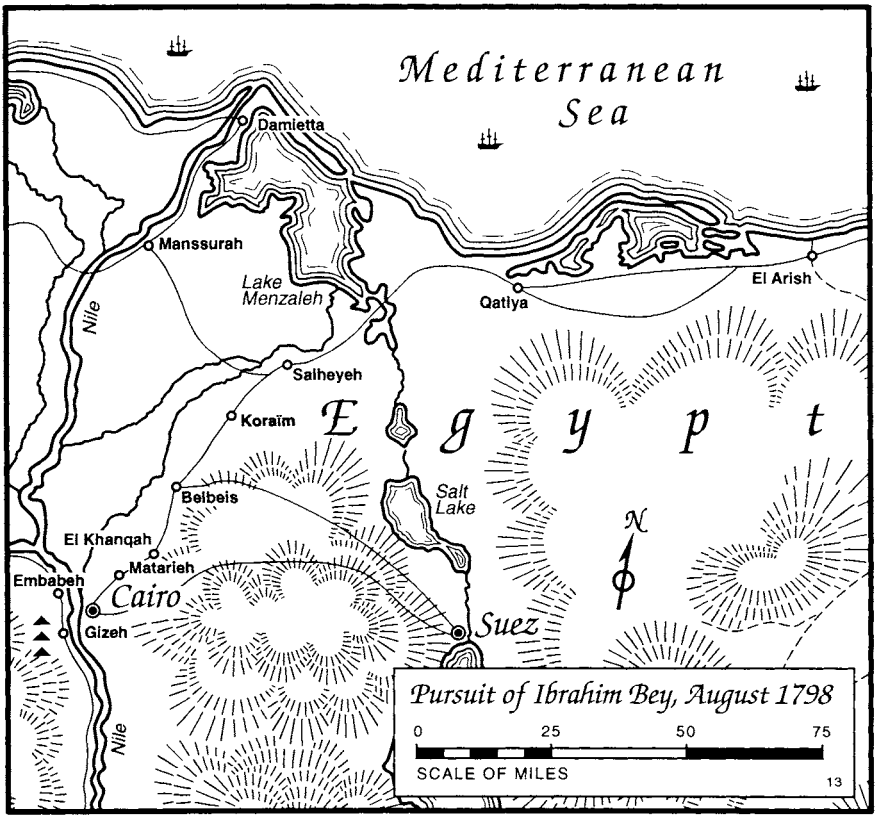
In the savage desert, lacking every necessity and seeing their men suffer, officers' complaints grew increasingly reckless and seditious. "I see only too late," one witness wrote, "that we are the victims doomed to carry out childish projects of the fevered minds of a few exalted men who, to satisfy their ambition, never considered the cost." Berthier, omnipresent as always, took note of the complaints and those who made them. What he knew Bonaparte also knew, but the commander-in-chief saved any discipline for a later date.[19]

Engaging Murad Bey's Mamelukes at Shubra-Khit on 13 July made a dreadful situation worse. The divisions marched on to Cairo in tight squares to escape the hit-and-run strikes following them after the skirmish. Breaking ranks was fatal, and few tried it after witnessing the brutal examples of mutilation and death by the pursuing enemy. The columns staggered out of the desert like exhausted Israelites from the wilderness, not to the promised land but to the pyramids of Giza. Ancient Egyptian monuments, no matter how fascinating, were no match for the prospect of rest, water, and food that awaited the starving, sunburned, sun-blinded soldiers in Cairo. Bonaparte told his troops they had to capture the city if they expected to enjoy its luxuries—the inhabitants were probably not inclined to simply hand it over to such a ragtag bunch. The resulting Battle of the Pyramids, enormous squares bristling with artillery repelling and breaking the Mameluke charges, restored morale. Lannes did not participate because squares were not his style. He watched the battle with Bonaparte and General Charles-François Dugua, doubtless wondering if he would ever get enough water, change his filthy, sand-encrusted uniform, sleep for a week, and stop itching from the ferocious clouds of gnats plaguing them.[20]

After the lopsided victory, Bonaparte established his headquarters in Cairo. One observer, evidently unimpressed by the weight of history, dismissed the city as "extremely filthy, full of mongrel dogs and garbage." Marmont thought it was very pretty, "for a Turkish city." Lannes had no opinion, good or bad—if Cairo had food, water, a bathtub, and a decent bed, he was happy to be there. When Vial was transferred to Rosetta, he took command of his division and set up headquarters in the old part of the city.[21]

A few days later one of Kléber's aides raced from Alexandria with the news of the French fleet's destruction in Aboukir Bay on 1 August. Bonaparte informed Berthier, Lannes and Murat, who were horrified by the implications, but he kept any misgivings to himself. The senior officers were not so reserved, and expressed their fears of an indefinite Egyptian interlude. Bonaparte had the *Institut d'Égypte* as a diversion and seemed happy enough with that. Lannes was not interested in the institute, antiquities, or pharaohs, and knew he was in for a long, worrisome, and difficult sojourn.[22]

The Mamelukes remained a threat and, until Bonaparte crushed them, Egypt


Mediterranean Sea
Damietta
Manssurah
Lake Menzaleh
Nile
Salheyeh
Koraïm
Belbeis
El Khanqah
Matarieh
Embabeh
Cairo
Gizeh
Nile
Qatiya
El Arish
Salt Lake
Suez
Egypt
N
Pursuit of Ibrahim Bey, August 1798
0
25
50
75
SCALE OF MILES
13

would not belong to the French. The plan was straightforward: chase the Mameluke chieftain Ibrahim-Bey from Egypt, capture his caravans and riches, then construct a fortress at Salheyeh on the Syrian border. Leaving Generals Louis Desaix and Bon to cover Cairo, Bonaparte chose Lannes, Reynier, and Dugua to pursue Ibrahim-Bey. Lannes left Cairo the morning of 6 August for El-Khanqah. Two days later, his division bivouacked at Belbeis, a small village lacking any amenities. An observer, not too exhausted to record his impressions, wrote that Belbeis was small, dirty, and extremely poor, though it might have a future as an obscure military outpost. Led by Bonaparte, the other two divisions advanced toward Koraïm. Because of delayed orders or his misinterpretation of them, Lannes left Belbeis behind schedule, then got hopelessly lost. Instead of reaching Koraïm, Lannes's exhausted division wandered into El-Soueh Kecht late on 10 August.[23]

Bonaparte's scouts reported that Ibrahim-Bey was preparing to evacuate his caravans and cavalry from Salheyeh. If the Mamelukes escaped into the Syrian desert, Bonaparte knew he could not pursue them. Without waiting for Lannes, he left Koraïm with the cavalry to catch the Mamelukes before they crossed the frontier, and reached Salheyeh on 12 August. The superb horsemen with their wickedly curved swords held their own against Murat's cavalry before escaping into Syria with survivors and most of Ibrahim-Bey's caravans. Lannes missed the confrontation. He had just reached Koraïm at dawn the day before, then left when he discovered the other divisions were well ahead of him. Prodding his weary troops, he trudged toward Salheyeh but never made it. Somewhere along the desert tracks new orders caught up with him. With dismay he read that he was to turn around and march back to Koraïm.[24]

Satisfied he had at least evicted the Mamelukes from Egypt, Bonaparte returned to Cairo. It was not a pleasant trek. Lannes was still irritated that his division had wasted three days in useless marching, had not gotten close enough to the enemy to fire a single shot, and was now dragging home over the same rough tracks. He never bothered to consider that he might have been at fault for the debacle—it was not in his nature to do so. Berthier and his voluminous, ever-changing, and sometimes contradictory orders seemed a more satisfactory culprit. Lannes was not alone in his irritation. Another officer wrote that complaints from generals and soldiers "went past all bounds." However, when Lannes's division straggled into Cairo the evening of 15 August, this same officer noted that the prospect of a single day's rest made up for a month of fatigue.[25]

At temporary leisure in Cairo, many officers reflected on the disaster at Aboukir Bay, the abortive pursuit of Ibrahim-Bey, and indulged in another round of gripe sessions. This time Bonaparte decided not to let it pass without action. To settle the matter, he ordered General Dugua to invite all senior officers quartered in Cairo to dinner. Somewhere between the various courses, Bonaparte warned the officers that their mutinous comments had better stop. "I know several generals are unhappy and have expressed their sentiments to their troops," Bonaparte told them. "They'd better be careful—I make no distinctions between generals and drummer-boys—I'll shoot one as easily as the other." Lannes was probably fidgeting, remembering how he had stomped on his hat and cursed.

Bonaparte never glanced his way. Instead he leveled a warning at Murat: "I'd hate to knock off a fine head like yours—I'd regret it later, but I'd do so without a second's thought." Furious at being singled out from an equally guilty crowd, Murat swore to his friend Auguste Colbert that he "just *knew* that bastard Lannes ratted on us!" As culpable as the rest, Lannes would not have been stupid enough to implicate fellow officers who could turn on him in a second. Murat remained unconvinced, however, and the odd, competitive, and frequently volatile relationship between these two generals began that night.[26]

Bonaparte made plans for a fête in Cairo on 21 September to serve several purposes. He wanted to celebrate a new year of the Republic, solidify relations between the army and the Egyptians, and commemorate the end of Mameluke rule. Already a master of public displays and propaganda, he selected the large square at Esbekieh and ordered Lannes, Murat, Bon, and Dumas to assemble their divisions there. He insisted that all officers and soldiers wear their best uniforms and every decoration they had. Volunteers erected a large obelisk in the center of the square with inscriptions from the Koran and the French Republic. Military bands played patriotic songs to warm the hearts of all good republicans. After the public spectacle, Bonaparte hosted a large dinner for every dignitary within riding distance, some 150 people of all ranks, French and Egyptian. It was a night of diversity: the tricolor flew next to Ottoman standards, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* was displayed with the Koran, a red Phyrgian cap hung from a Muslim crescent, and natural French gaiety enlivened natural Egyptian gravity.[27]

In spite of Bonaparte's fêtes, Cairo showed signs of increasing restlessness. Lannes, Murat, and General Antoine-Joseph Veaux, with provincial military governors, spent more and more of their time putting down disturbances throughout the city and surrounding areas. These outbreaks were just the warm-up for a larger, more dangerous revolt. It began on the morning of 21 October when crowds gathered in the narrow streets of the old city. As the day wore on, their size increased and their mood grew ugly as muezzins "atop their minarets exhorted all true believers to rally and assist the rebels in wreaking vengeance on the infidels." By midday the mob turned murderous, tearing any Frenchman they found to pieces, then pillaging and burning their houses. General Louis Caffarelli barely escaped the crowds on his way to join Bonaparte, Lannes, and General Elzéar Dommartin on the island of Roudah. Commandant Dominique-Martin Dupuy sent a report that the crowds had moved to the *Institut* and Kassim Bey's palace. He underestimated the situation, claiming it was just an undisciplined skirmish. He paid for his poor judgment when the mob killed him near the al-Azhar mosque.[28]

After a night of escalating violence, Bonaparte sent Lannes and Dumas with their infantry and cavalry regiments to block the crowd and cut off *fellahin* reinforcements from outside the walls. They drove the *fellahin* back into the desert and turned to contain the rebels in the city. Some Egyptian leaders tried to calm the mob before the French troops retaliated in force, but their people shot at them, screaming that appeasement was weakness.[29]

The rebels controlled the Great Mosque, which they had barricaded and

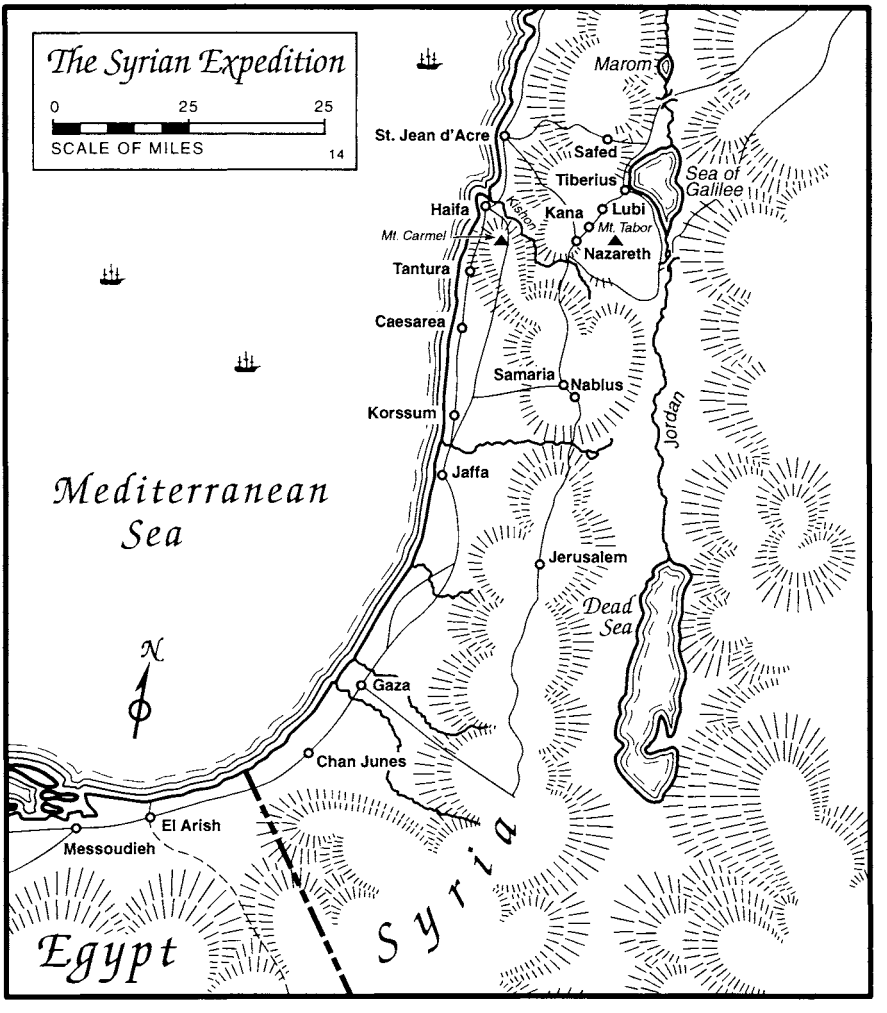
garrisoned. Lannes and his troops advanced toward the mosque with extreme caution, ducking through narrow streets and into surrounding houses, clambering over terraces and across rooftops. Their progress was methodical, tedious, and dangerous. Lannes knew he needed artillery to be effective, and Bonaparte sent him Dommartin's guns and a message for the mobs: "I'd prefer to avoid launching the terrible blow I hold suspended over your heads." The rebels ignored his words and refused to surrender. Dommartin unleashed the artillery and the bombardment, accompanied by a fortuitous and severe late-afternoon thunderstorm, frightened the superstitious mob into capitulation. Bonaparte was not in a forgiving mood. He had lost Dupuy and his aide Sulkowski, and he ordered the immediate execution of all remaining armed rebels. "You refused my clemency when I offered it," he told them. "You started this but I'm going to finish it." Lannes got the job of pursuing rebels and executing them. Many were the muezzins who had abandoned their religious duties to preach violence. Dealing with them did not bother him—he was used to it—and the executions continued for several days.[30]

When Cairo settled down, Bonaparte rewarded his senior officers for their efforts. Evidently expecting them to accede with more or less good grace to an indefinite stay, he gave them lavish houses, fully staffed and provisioned, that had belonged to displaced Mameluke aristocracy. Lannes received a rather ostentatious, sprawling residence on the pleasant little island of Roudah. If he been so inclined and had the imagination for it, he could have lived as well as any Mameluke bey, concubines included. Bonaparte, the benefactor of so much opulence, inconsiderately interrupted any thoughts in that direction. A new campaign in the Syrian desert, properly planned and equipped, replaced indolent days in Cairo. Four divisions with 13,000 men marched north on 9 February. This time Reynier led the advance-guard, followed by Kléber, Bon, then Lannes.[31]

Lacking proper transport for siege artillery, Bonaparte sent most of his guns up the coast in a small flotilla, then set off on the same route he had followed earlier during the pursuit of Ibrahim-Bey. By the morning of 11 February, most of the divisions again headed for Koraïm and Salheyeh. Their progress was steady but not especially rapid—no one saw a need for haste this time. When Bonaparte received news from El-Arish that Reynier and the advance-guard encountered Mameluke opposition in a strongly-fortified position, he hurried the divisions forward.[32]

Moving swiftly through the desert was never easy. Lannes was under pressure to reach Katieh as soon as he could, even if it meant marching all night. It did, and Lannes's troops staggered into Katieh around three in the morning on 16 February. One soldier recalled the grim experience: "Strong, hot winds blew the sand, obliterating the tracks of those in front. . . . After twenty-one hours of crossing shifting sands in blazing heat, we reached Katieh sometime after two [in the morning]. It had been a dreadful day—officers and soldiers collapsed from thirst, hunger, fatigue, and heatstroke."[33]

Lannes found new orders at Katieh, urging him to leave for El-Arish at once and march north as quickly as possible. Berthier included many suggestions for the requisite speed: stock up on food and water, leave all baggage at Katieh, and


The Syrian Expedition
0 25 25
SCALE OF MILES
14
Marom
St. Jean d'Acre
Safed
Tiberius
Sea of Galilee
Haifa
Kishon
Kana
Lubi
Mt. Carmel
Mt. Tabor
Nazareth
Tantura
Caesarea
Samaria
Nablus
Korssum
Jordan
Jaffa
Mediterranean Sea
Jerusalem
Dead Sea
N
Gaza
Chan Junes
El Arish
Messoudieh
Egypt
Syria

detach a small escort to accompany the much slower artillery. Lannes reached El-Arish on 20 February, the day after it capitulated. Once again he had hurried for nothing, and once again he and his troops were worn out. He collapsed outside the walls to rest and restock. He did not have long, for Bonaparte ordered him lead the advance-guard into Syria.[34]

Lannes left at dawn on the 24th, accompanied by Bon's division, and reached Gaza two days later. He found about 800 of Ibrahim-Bey's Mamelukes and 600 fellahin prepared to defend the town. Kléber marched directly at Gaza, while Lannes with the light infantry and Murat's cavalry charged up the heights. The Mamelukes melted away into the desert, while the fellahin proved undisciplined and ineffective outside the walls. Despite long desert marches with minimum food and water, Lannes and the 22nd *Légère* performed so well that Bonaparte commended their "exemplary conduct" in his order of the day on 26 February.[35]

Jaffa was a different story—a diverse force loyal to the Ottomans garrisoned its strong fortress. What they lacked in ethnic unity they made up for in religious fervor and determination. Bonaparte thought he might have to settle for a siege, a lengthy and unpopular operation. On 3 March, Lannes and Bon circled the town as Dommartin's artillery opened fire. After a few hours of steady bombardment, Bonaparte ordered Berthier to send an envoy to the governor of Jaffa to propose a cessation of hostilities. After the unfortunate envoy delivered his message, the defenders decapitated him and hoisted his head above the ramparts for the French to see.[36]

The artillery redoubled its fire until it opened a breach large enough for assault troops to squeeze through. Lannes led six grenadier companies over the rubble, with scaling ladders and sappers behind him. They charged through and halted just inside the walls. Proceeding with caution, house by house, Lannes and the 22nd *Légère* rushed the entrenched enemy and chased them through the streets and up to the rooftops. Fierce and bloody, it was an unequal encounter, but the troops refused to stop the slaughter in spite of their exhaustion. With revenge on their minds, they spared few in Jaffa, regardless of sex, age, or whether he or she was armed. Lannes refused to stop them either, ending the long day with as much blood on his hands as anyone.[37]

Jaffa surrendered on 7 March. Bonaparte noted that he was "especially pleased with the conduct" of the 22nd *Légère*. Later that afternoon, Lannes shared a perch on the barrel of a three-pound gun with Bonaparte as long lines of prisoners marched out of Jaffa. There were some familiar faces—many were combatants from El-Arish and Gaza who had promised not to fight again. Bonaparte was angry at their treachery. "What the hell am I going to do with all these prisoners?" he asked Lannes. It was not a rhetorical question. They were taken to the nearby seashore, where French troops shot them or forced them into the sea to drown. Bonaparte counted on the endemic plagues to deal with any survivors.[38]

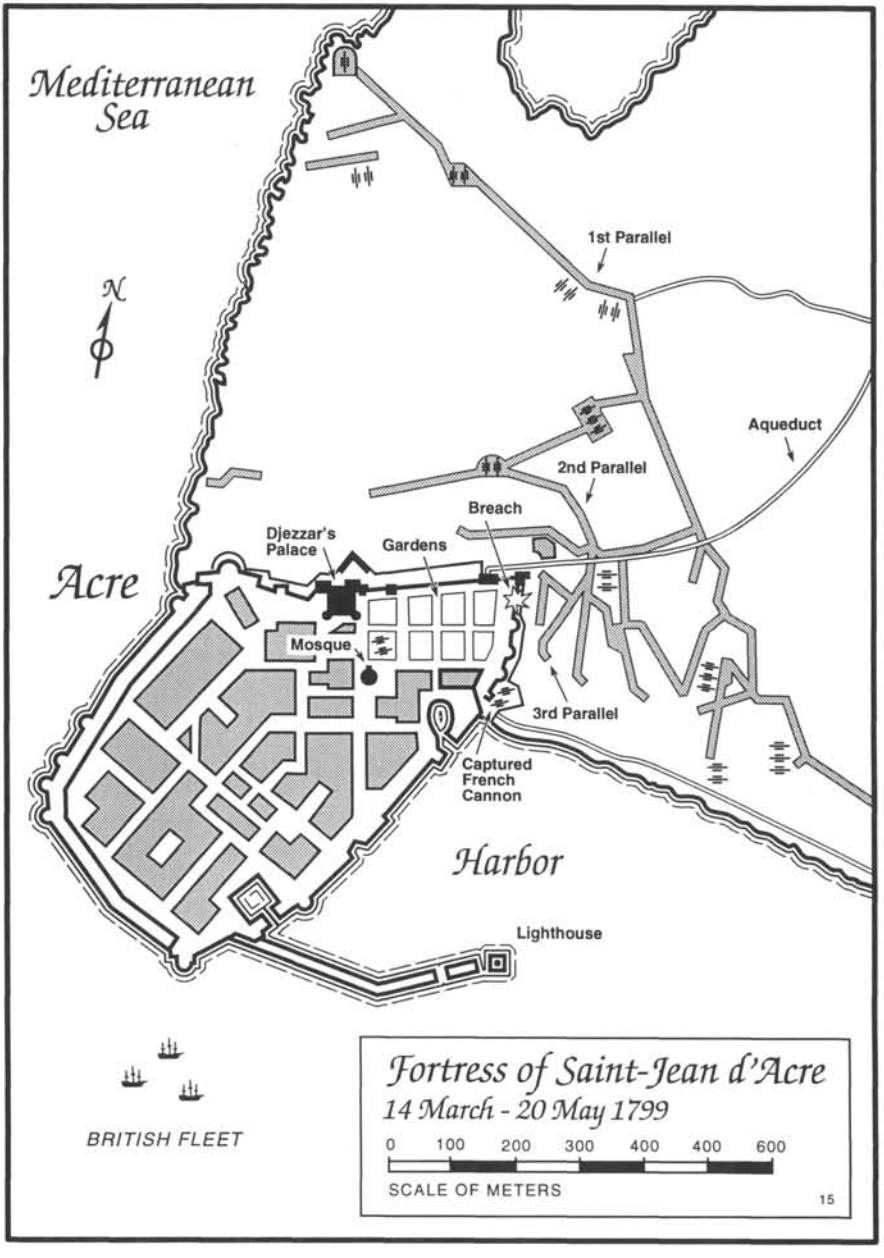
The divisions resumed their march north toward Saint-Jean-d'Acre through rugged hill terrain with slopes choked by olive groves and tangled scrub oaks. The weather turned nasty, drenching them in a torrential downpour for two days. The swollen mountain streams washed out the narrow tracks, but the soldiers slogged

on in muddy water nearly to their knees. Relentlessly behind them, the enemy picked off stragglers at will. An exasperated Bonaparte ordered Kléber and Bon to attack the Turkish cavalry and sent Lannes to stop a group of armed peasants at Nablus from joining the Turks. Lannes defeated many of the peasants on the plain but, contrary to his orders, he and the 69th demi-brigade chased the rest into the mountains above Nablus. This "rash skirmish" was a disaster. On their own turf now, the peasants turned on Lannes and his men, forcing them to retreat with over forty casualties, including chef de brigade Barthélemy. Bonaparte castigated Lannes for disobeying his orders, uselessly sacrificing his men, and negating the effects of victory elsewhere. Lannes tried unsuccessfully to excuse his conduct, insisting that because the "peasant rabble" resisted him they deserved to be crushed. "You're in no position to play d'Artagnan," Bonaparte snapped, and shut him up.[39]

The French reached the twelfth-century crusaders' fortress of Saint-Jean-d'Acre on 17 March. Surrounded by the sea on three sides with the British fleet as interested observers offshore, Ahmed Djezzar Pasha, known as "the Butcher," commanded the fort. Although Bonaparte had lost all but three of his siege guns to the British, who had captured them along the coast, he was nevertheless determined to assault the fort. Lannes led the initial assault on the 28th. When it failed, his troops retreated to the relative safety of the siege trenches under construction. Abandoning frontal assaults, the French concentrated on siege works progressing under the watchful eyes of Turks who rarely missed an opportunity to fire at any Frenchman stupid enough to show himself above the trenches. A Turkish sharpshooter spotted Lannes, who forgot to be careful, and shot him. The bullet passed through both cheeks, taking out a few back teeth. The wound was painful though not incapacitating; at least it kept him quiet for a couple of days. Thereafter he would always speak with a slight lisp, more pronounced whenever he got excited, which was usually every day.[40]

With the siege works finally completed, three columns carried out a large-scale assault on 8 May. General François Rambeaud led the first column through a breach in the outer walls into the city, while Lannes reinforced him about four in the afternoon. The Turks launched a counterattack against the two divisions. Caught between the breach and the inner walls, they could neither advance nor retreat. Rambeaud was killed inside the city, but Lannes managed to get most of his men through the breach, down the glacis, and back to the trenches. As he came through the breach, a Turkish musket ball struck him in the neck; he fell unconscious at the base of the wall. Knowing the Turks' penchant for mutilating their prisoners before killing them, a grenadier captain raced up the glacis, grabbed his commander by the ankle, and dragged him over the rocks and debris to safety.[41]

Lannes began complaining as soon as he revived. Swatting at the hovering army surgeon, he told him, "Bouncing over all those rocks damn near killed me—look at these bruises! Leave me alone—I'm not dead yet." A slight permanent tilt of the head joined the lisp as souvenirs of Lannes's service in Syria. The intrepid grenadier captain later received money to buy an inn in Gascony, a gift from a still-grateful and very wealthy marshal of the empire.[42]


Mediterranean Sea
N
1st Parallel
Aqueduct
2nd Parallel
Breach
Djezzar's Palace
Gardens
Acre
Mosque
3rd Parallel
Captured French Cannon
Harbor
Lighthouse
BRITISH FLEET
Fortress of Saint-Jean d'Acre
14 March - 20 May 1799
0 100 200 300 400 400 600
SCALE OF METERS
15

Bonaparte's report to the Directory on 10 May recommended Lannes's promotion to *général de division*. The Order of the Day, issued well before official approval, mentioned "campaigns where [Lannes] has honored the arms of the Republic by remarkable feats so often repeated." The promise of promotion did not make Lannes feel any better. Instead he complained to Doctor Nicolas-René Desgenettes that Bonaparte's ambition had brought them all to a sorry state of affairs. Desgenettes dismissed these complaints as the result of head wounds and a naturally volatile temper. He also noticed with some amusement how when Bonaparte entered the hospital tent, Lannes managed to exchange his scathing comments in midsentence to fatuous words of gratitude for his commander's concern and friendship. The astute doctor never thought Lannes was a hypocrite; rather, he was someone who could swing from one emotional extreme to another in seconds. Bonaparte also knew from experience that Lannes's bad moods rarely lasted, nor did they truly affect his loyalty to his commander-in-chief.[43]

Even though the French had been cut off from the rest of Europe since the destruction of the fleet, rumors had ways of reaching the stranded Armée d'Orient; rumors traveled the other way as well. This quixotic flow of misinformation had disastrous results for Lannes. Rumors heading to France reported that he had been killed at the siege of Acre. The report caused his mother, Cécile, to die of a stroke in July 1799. His insouciant grass widow Polette had enough presence of mind to contact the minister of war for confirmation, although it was possible she was rather more interested in what she might receive from her husband's pension. The minister wrote to reassure her that her husband was very much alive, though wounded. Rumors heading to Egypt informed Lannes about the birth of a son on 17 February 1799. It was *not* news that delighted the general; he had serious doubts that he was the father. He could do nothing about it now, other than rail against the frailty of women with Bonaparte, who had similar reasons to share his complaints. While the commander-in-chief consoled himself with the conveniently available Madame Fourès, Lannes plotted a suitable revenge.[44]

Because Saint-Jean-d'Acre would neither fall nor surrender, Bonaparte conceded the Syrian campaign's failure and prepared to leave. Only the wounded could ride or be carried in litters; everyone else was expected to march. Lannes was still too weak to walk and he could not ride, so he returned to Cairo in a litter like an eastern pasha. He had six weeks to recover before Bonaparte decided to engage the persistent enemy once more. The Turks occupied a formidable position at Aboukir on a narrow isthmus, dug in and flanked by cannon, with a crenellated and barricaded fort to the front. In spite of Lannes's best efforts, the battle outside the fort on 25 July belonged to Murat's cavalry, who received all the glory in Bonaparte's dispatches. At least Lannes noticed with satisfaction that Murat had been wounded in the jaw by a musket ball and sent off to the hospital in Alexandria.[45]

Three days later Bonaparte ordered Lannes to besiege the fort at Aboukir where the Turkish army had retreated. It did not matter that he had General Antoine Rampon's infantry division, Louis-Nicolas Davout's 15th Dragoons, and General Henri-Gatien Bertrand's engineers to organize the siege works—he despised sieges, had had enough of them at Saint-Jean-d'Acre, and saw little

chance for glory spending days digging trenches and constructing batteries. Not a patient man in any case, he decided to speed things along and chase the Turks from the houses outside the fort. They counterattacked and captured more houses. Lannes led another assault and successfully beat the Turks back into Aboukir. Shot in the leg during the assault, he hobbled back to the hospital in Alexandria. Doctor Dominique Larrey was concerned at first with the infected wound and high fever, but Lannes was too tough to succumb just yet. When he felt better, he relieved the boredom of convalescence by making snide comments to Murat lying in the next cot. His jaw still tightly bandaged, the cavalry commander could not respond.[46]

Egypt had begun to lose whatever charms it once possessed. The news from France reported losses against the Austrians in northern Italy and in the southern German states. As far as Bonaparte was concerned, the situation at home seemed more crucial than failed dreams of Eastern empires or British embarrassment. Choosing his course of action, Bonaparte left a letter for Kléber dated 22 August: "Attached you will find an order to take command of the army—I'm taking Berthier, Lannes, Murat, Andréossy, and Marmont with me." At five in the morning on the next day, they boarded the frigates *Muiron* and *Carrère* to leave Egypt.[47]

As much as Bonaparte wanted to reach France in a hurry, he could not control the winds across the Mediterranean nor eliminate danger from the English fleet. The debate over which route to take, begun a few days before departure, continued until Bonaparte ordered Admiral Honoré-Joseph Ganteaume to follow the North African coast until the autumnal equinox brought a favorable change in wind direction. The prevailing northwest summer winds refused to cooperate, and the two ships spent a miserable twenty-one days bouncing along the Syrian coast or sailing perilously close to Alexandria. On the *Carrère*, Marmont noted that "it was easy to understand our impatience . . . some complaints were quickly growing against both our direction of sail and the admiral." Bourrienne remembered a dull, monotonous voyage for everyone else but Bonaparte, who played cards—and cheated—while he worried about the Directory's reception and an encounter with the English fleet.[48]

The ships finally passed the ancient ruins of Carthage; the winds shifted, and they headed north for Sardinia. Forced to halt at Corsica on 1 October, Bonaparte made the most of his unplanned layover. He and his officers attended receptions and dinners, and went hunting for the next four days. When the winds turned favorable again, they sailed for Fréjus and landed on 9 October. The rules of quarantine might have delayed an impatient Bonaparte and his companions even longer, but they managed to circumvent the sanitary laws. A crowd gathered to welcome the returning commander-in-chief and expressed their sentiments unmistakably. "We'd rather have the plague than the Austrians!" they shouted, and ignored quarantine regulations. Bonaparte left for Paris the afternoon of the 9th, while Lannes, Marmont, and Murat went to Toulon, where they had left their carriages more than a year ago.[49]

NOTES

1. Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, I, 127.

2. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 2426, Bonaparte to the Executive Directory, 5 March 1798, IV, 1–4; Clement-Étienne-Lucien de la Jonquière, *L'expédition d'Égypte 1798–1801*, 5 vols. (Paris, n.d.), I, 223; Joseph Bonaparte, *Mémoires et correspondance politique et militaire du roi Joseph*, publiés, annotés et mis en ordre par Albert du Casse, 10 vols. (Paris, 1854), I, 69–70.

3. Antoine-Claire Thibaudeau, *Mémoires sur la Convention et le Directoire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1824), II, 346; M. Vertray. *L'Armée française en Égypte* (Paris, 1883), 7; François Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte en Égypte et Syrie* (Paris, 1976), 15; Service historique, Mémoires Reconnaissances, André Peyrusse, *Extraits du Journal*, Carton MR 582, 2; La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, I, 252, n. 1.

4. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 2462, Bonaparte to Lannes, 30 March 1798, IV, 44–45; La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, I, 224.

5. La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, I, 197, 237, 286.

6. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 2513, Bonaparte to Lannes, 17 April 1798, IV, 88; No. 2489, Bonaparte to Lannes, 11 April 1798, IV, 66; La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, I, 357, n. 1.

7. Service Historique, Mémoires Reconnaissances, Peyrusse, *Journal*, Carton MR 582, 2; La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, I, 283; Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 17.

8. Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 20; A.-V. Arnault, *Souvenirs d'un sexagénaire*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1833), IV, 114–16.

9. Arnault, *Souvenirs,* IV, 62–64.

10. Édouard de Villiers du Terrage, *Journal et souvenirs sur l'expédition d'Égypte* (Paris, 1899), 28; Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 22; La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, I, 604.

11. Arnault, *Souvenirs,* IV, 141–42.

12. Bernoyer wrote, "I knew the general [Lannes] well enough to ask him if I could go too. He did not want me at first but I insisted, and he relented." The story of the expedition to the convent is contained in a letter to his cousin, written before the French left Malta. None of Lannes's biographers mentioned it. Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 22–30.

13. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 2645, Bonaparte's Order of 13 June 1798, IV, 198; Service Historique, Mémoires Reconnaissances, Peyrusse, *Journal*, Carton MR 582, 8; Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 80.

14. Lannes to Berthier, 2 July 1798, quoted in La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, II, 52, n. 2; Service Historique, Situations, Armée d'Orient, 1–15 July 1798, Carton B^{6*} 187.

15. There is no record whether Tallien agreed with Kléber's views on the Armée d'Orient in general or Lannes's qualities as a general or social escort in particular. However, Tallien remained in Egypt and became editor-in-chief of the French newspaper, *Courier de l'Égypte*. The account of Kléber's dinner parties was recorded in the journal kept by his état-major, and quoted in La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, II, 231–32.

16. Service historique, Mémoires Reconnaissances, Peyrusse, *Journal*, Carton MR 582, 8.

17. "Journal de Laugier," quoted in La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, II, 123; Colonel Vigo Roussillon, "Mémoires militaires," quoted in La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, II, 132, n. 1.

18. Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, I, 163.

19. Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 50.

20. Service Historique, Situations, Armée d'Orient, 1 August 1798, Carton B^{6*} 187*.

21. Marmont, *Mémoires*, 1, 385; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 2849, Bonaparte to Berthier, 26 July 1798, IV, 367.

22. Bourrienne said that on the contrary, Bonaparte was "deeply distressed by the disasters that now assailed him." Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, I, 163.

23. Lannes's division consisted of the 22nd *Légère* demi-brigade, the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 13th Line demi-brigade, the 3rd company of the 4th Horse Artillery regiment (the same ones who had given him so much aggravation at Lyon), and the 5th company of the 6th sapper battalion. La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, II, 368, 372–73; Detroye, "Journal," quoted in La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, II, 371.

24. La Jonquière, working with contemporary sources, did not consider the action at Salheyeh to be conclusive, or at least not in the way Bonaparte intended. Some modern writers, however, have claimed that Salheyeh was a "crushing defeat" for the Mamelukes. See La Jonquière, *L'Expédition*, II, 373–77; David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York, 1966), 227.

25. Report of Michaux, quoted in La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, II, 379, n. 1 and 2.

26. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 40–41.

27. *Courier de l'Égypte*, No. 8, 27 September 1798.

28. Jean-Joseph Ader, *Histoire de l'expédition d'Égypte et de Syrie* (Paris, 1826), 144–45; Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 89; J. Chanut, *Campagne de Bonaparte en Égypte et en Syrie*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1832), 56–57.

29. Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 90; Ader, *Histoire*, 148.

30. Jean-Pierre Doguereau, *Journal de l'expédition d'Égypte* (Paris, 1904), 94.

31. La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, IV, 98. The total for the Syrian expedition was 12,945 troops. Lannes commanded a division of 2,924 men, led by generals Veaux and Antoine-Joseph Robin, with the 22nd *Légère* and the 13th and 69th Line demi-brigades. Service Historique, Situations, Armée d'Orient, 9 February 1799, Carton B^{6*} 187*.

32. La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, IV, 85; 172–74.

33. Service historique, Mémoires Reconnaissances, Peyrusse, *Journal*, 91, Carton MR 582.

34. Berthier to Lannes, 16 February 1799, quoted in La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, IV, 182.

35. Alexandre Berthier, *Relations de l'expédition de Syrie, de la bataille d'Aboukir et de la reprise du fort de ce nom* (Paris, n.d.), 17–18, 20–21; La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, IV, 215–16; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 3999, Order of the Day, 26 February 1799, IV, 439; Doguereau, *Journal*, 159.

36. Berthier, *Relations de Syrie*, 22; Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 143, 145.

37. Ader, *Histoire*, 181.

38. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 3992, Berthier to General Dugua, 26 February 1799, V, 432; Detroye's journal, quoted in Jean Thiry, *Bonaparte en Égypte* (Paris, 1973), 317; Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 146.

39. Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, I, 199; Mathieu Dumas, *Précis des évènemens militaires, ou essai historique sur la guerre présente*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1801), II, 237; Bernoyer, *Avec Bonaparte*, 151; Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, I, 199; Auguste-Napoléon-Joseph, marquis de Colbert-Chabanis, *Traditions et souvenirs, ou mémoires touchant le temps et la vie du*

général Auguste Colbert, 1793–1809, par le marquis de Chabanis (son fils), 5 vols. (Paris, 1863–73), II, 208.

40. Dumas, *Précis*, II, 236.

41. Berthier, *Relations de Syrie*, 47–48.

42. Berthier, *Relation des campagnes*, 93; Lannes, *Maréchal Lannes*, 47.

43. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 4125, Order of the Day, 10 May 1799, V, 545. Desgenettes, quoted in Laffargue, *Jean Lannes*, 93. Unfortunately, the third volume of Desgenettes's *Souvenirs* was never published. He had given a few proof copies to friends, but he died before completing the volume. Consequently, no copies of the third volume were ever printed for sale, and the proof copies are difficult to locate now. La Jonquière found a copy in the library of the Committee on Health in Paris. La Jonquière, *L'expédition*, IV, 27–28, n. 2.

44. Service Historique, dossier maréchal Lannes, letter of 27 July 1799, Carton MF^2 10. Although the French were essentially cut off from the rest of Europe, certain letters and information did reach the Armée d'Orient. Bad news traveled quickly, possibly aided by the British, who also intercepted letters to France and published them in the London *Times*. At any rate, Bonaparte heard of Joséphine's continuing liaison with the dashing army contractor, Hippolyte Charles, at almost the same time that Lannes's concerned "friend" informed him that his wife had a son.

45. The whole expedition to Syria had suffered equally. From its original effective strength of 12,945 men, it was now at only 9,420 troops. Service Historique, Armée d'Orient, Situations, 19 May 1799, Carton B^{6*} 187*, Situations, 23 July 1799, Carton B^{6*} 187*; Dogucreau, *Journal*, 280.

46. Dominique-Jean Larrey. *Mémoires de chirurgie militaire et campagnes*. 4 vols. (Paris, 1812), I, 283.

47. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 4374, Bonaparte to General Kléber, 22 August 1799, V, 734; Marmont, *Mémoires*, II, 42; Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, I, 232.

48. Marmont, *Mémoires*, II, 43; Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, I, 233.

49. Marmont, *Mémoires*, II, 47; Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, I, 240.

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Chapter 4

Following Hannibal and Caesar: L'Armée de Réserve, 1800

Though Lannes fought like his soldiers, he never forgot he was their leader.
—Claude-Victor Perrin

Lannes did not go to Paris with the other officers in Bonaparte's entourage. He did not go to Lectoure either; with his marriage in shambles, he was not about to show up on his own doorstep, shouting, "Honey, I'm home!" Instead, he stopped in Toulouse for several days and thought about what to do. Bonaparte did not give him much time, however, before sending him word that he needed him in Paris. Lannes took the scenic route and spent a day or two in Bordeaux—evidently whatever political shenanigans were going on in the capital did not concern him very much. He and a couple of officers attended some sort of public festivity, where he noticed a group of young civilians glaring at him. He ignored them until one shouted, "That's the jerk who threatened to shoot the honest citizens of Marseille!" That was all the provocation he needed—the civilian found himself staring at the point of Lannes's sword. Authorities had to be summoned to break up the free-for-all, obviously more exciting than the municipal festivities.[1]

When he reached Paris the last week in October, Lannes discovered why Bonaparte wanted him there—plans for a coup were underway and Bonaparte needed all the support he could get. He did not include Lannes in the high-level backroom plotting, instead assigning him command of all infantry troops in the city to maintain order at the appointed time. With other key officers he would also host a breakfast gathering to keep everyone occupied and in a central location until they heard the first part of the coup at the Tuileries had succeeded. Lannes complied, but he did not like it. He insisted on going to Saint-Cloud for the second, riskier phase, but Bonaparte refused. "You're still limping around and I don't think you can keep up. Besides, you're more important here." Lannes stifled his impulse to argue that he could *too* keep up, did what he was told, and missed the near-debacle at Saint-Cloud. At least he had no problem with the Paris

troops—no one thought to protest the change in government.[2]

When the coup of 18 Brumaire changed General Bonaparte into First Consul Bonaparte, most of his confederates and military subordinates had no trouble with the transition. However, Lannes could not grasp the fact that his friend the commander-in-chief now headed the government and the rules had changed. Used to the free-wheeling republican informality in the army, he watched with some amazement as his colleagues adopted a reserved, almost subservient demeanor toward the first consul. Lannes refused to change—he probably did not know how—and continued to *tutoyer* Bonaparte long after no one else would dare. Though he might have wondered what all the fuss was about, he accompanied Bonaparte in a sort of triumphal and symbolic parade to the Tuileries, last home of Louis XVI and now the first consul's official residence. Benjamin Constant remembered the procession and said Lannes was easy to spot among the throngs of luminaries by his total military bearing and a "certain audacity."[3]

The newly developing consular court at the Tuileries, with its incipient Ancien régime protocol was a minefield for the general, who seemed to plant his boots squarely on every available explosive. The quintessential soldier, Lannes had no place among those increasingly conscious of their status and assiduously polishing their manners. The first consul certainly knew this, and sent him off to command the 17th military division headquartered in Toulouse.[4]

Toulouse was a safe remove from Paris; Lannes increased the distance by moving his headquarters to Auch after New Year's Day. His reasons were strictly personal: He knew every influential person in town and wanted to be close enough to Lectoure—without actually having to be there—to oversee his divorce proceedings. He had not wasted much time either. Practically on his first day back in Paris he had a notaire draw up papers granting his friend Dominique Montbrun power of attorney to act for him in the matter. In this case, justice—or Lannes's version of it—moved quickly. Polette received the summons to answer charges of adultery on 2 November. She scrambled around for an attorney willing to represent her, a difficult task considering the fact he would be challenging a popular general with strong local ties and friends in high places. Polette needed a "dream team"; instead, she got a provincial lawyer who was, in the eyes of one writer, mediocre at best and singularly ill-prepared for the resulting legal assassination.[5]

Lannes had no such difficulty. Montbrun was clever, resourceful, ever mindful of his client's status, and quite prepared to use whatever legal, illegal, or outright questionable means were required to secure the appropriate verdict. It would take him several weeks, but he prevailed. The Court of the first Instance sitting at Auch returned a judgment on 15 December against Polette, declaring her an adulteress and her son, Jean-Claude, illegitimate. Lannes thought it was over then, this "unfortunate episode" in his life, and counted himself lucky to be rid of a woman who not two years before had the audacity to accuse him of the same fall from marital grace. Polette may have been down, but she was far from out—she appealed the judgment.

Leaving Montbrun to kick his legal defense into overdrive, Lannes returned to Paris. One point raised by Polette's inept attorney bothered him. He had

claimed that while his client's husband was running all over southern France finalizing details for the Egyptian expedition, she had met him in May "somewhere between Toulon and Toulouse." Because this claim could damage his suit on appeal, Lannes was determined to prove it could not possibly be true. He did not think his word would be sufficient, an odd notion for a Gascon who placed such a premium on his personal honor, and tried to enlist Bonaparte's support. He asked for a sort of "official statement" from the first consul with regard to where exactly he had been during the critical time. The result was succinct: Lannes had served on Bonaparte's staff at Toulon where he remained *except* when he left to carry out particular missions until the *middle of May*. That certainly left the window of opportunity wide open, but Bonaparte refused to alter his statement, no matter how much Lannes insisted. Although Polette could not prove she had been anywhere near her husband, he could not prove he had *not* been with his wife.[6]

The matter of "he said/she said" rested in the hands of lawyers. Montbrun's job was to counter this glitch however he could. He did so by rounding up thirty witnesses for the prosecution who would attest to every indiscretion, real or invented, ever committed by this fatally free-spirited young woman. Lannes did not leave everything to the barracuda Montbrun: he fired off a letter to the Minister of Justice asking him to speed things along and end this "villainous affair." Despite the weight of Montbrun's "evidence" and the minister's intervention, if indeed he assisted in any way, the court would not issue the final divorce decree until 17 June 1800.

Lannes's earlier biographers trod lightly around the subject of this messy divorce, probably because they were only interested in military matters or because they had worked closely with the marshal's descendants and whatever documents were still in their possession. It was therefore in everyone's best interests to lay all blame squarely on Polette's pretty shoulders and exonerate Lannes from the slightest hint of wrongdoing. Recent writers have taken a somewhat more objective view. Although they point out—and correctly so—that Lannes was not entirely without fault, they still claim his ex-wife was guilty as sin, and a totally unworthy partner for a hero whose feet, while not of clay, were nevertheless a bit muddy. None of these gentlemen, then or now, apparently bothered to do much legal research, instead accepting all testimony and juridical arguments at face value. More important, none of them seemed to question Lannes's motives for railroading the demise of his marriage through the courts and his insistence on proof other than his own testimony that he could not possibly be the child's father. None of them wondered why he never took the next logical legal step and had Jean-Claude declared illegitimate and barred from any inheritance in a separate and distinct action from the judgment rendered against Polette. Perhaps enough doubt had been raised at the hearings—or had been present from the beginning—that he could not take that last step. His failure to do so would have interesting repercussions, though he would not be around to see them.

Lannes returned to Paris convinced all would be well, one way or another, and wondered if life held any prospects for a new campaign or if he were doomed to endless courtly nonsense at the Tuileries. He was in luck, because the British,

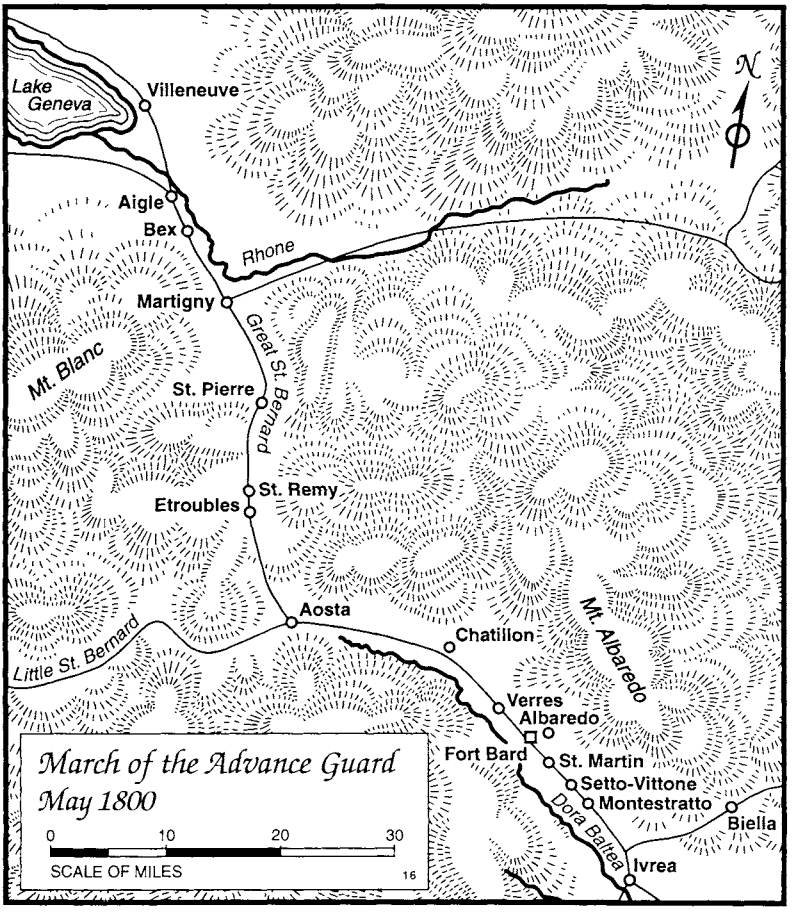
deciding the expense was justified, financed the Second Coalition while the Austrians regrouped for another campaign on two fronts. First consul Bonaparte already had two armies in the field: General Jean-Victor Moreau's Armée du Rhin and Masséna's Armée d'Italie. Moreau faced the Austrian general Paul Kray in Germany, leaving Masséna to the elderly Michael Melas in northern Italy. Bonaparte did not intend to command either of these armies; he created a new one from troops maintaining order in "royalist" provinces, demobilized units from the previous Italian and Egyptian campaigns, and new conscripts. He dismissed Germany as a sideshow and planned to lead his army through Switzerland and across the Alps to confront Melas in Lombardy. He gave Berthier the names of officers he wanted to command the divisions, then issued a decree on 8 March formalizing the Armée de Réserve. The decree was a bit late—most of the troops were already heading for the staging area. Lannes received orders to reach Dijon no later than 5 April and, delighted to be going to war, any war, he arrived a day early.[7]

The first consul shuffled some high-level positions before leaving Paris. He appointed Lazare Carnot, a clever military man who had survived being a member of the Committee of Public Safety and a director, as minister of war. Although he was qualified for the position, Carnot was a "political" choice—Bonaparte did not like him much. Berthier's position as commander-in-chief was a technicality; no one expected him to actually do anything. To explain the dubious appointment, Bonaparte pointed out that the Constitution of the Year VIII prohibited him as first consul from serving as commander-in-chief.[8]

Six infantry divisions formed the nucleus of the army, with Murat's cavalry, the new Consular Guard, and Marmont's artillery reserve in support. General François Watrin's 2nd infantry division became Lannes's advance-guard. He did not travel with it; instead, he accompanied Bonaparte as an ex-officio member of his staff. Reaching Geneva on 9 May, Bonaparte completed his plans to march across Switzerland, through the Alpine passes, and down to Lombardy. He also finalized the advance-guard's organization, adding General Joseph-Antoine Mainoni's 28th demi-brigade, Watrin's division, and General Jean Rivaud's 12th Hussar regiment and the 21st Chasseurs. As Victor later wrote with a bit of Gallic hyperbole, the first consul entrusted Lannes with "the glorious mission of opening the road to victory for the [rest of the] army."[9]

The itinerary was rough, and the timetable precise and demanding. The Great Saint-Bernard pass was the highest point along the route, accessible by roads and tracks clinging to mountainsides and following swift mountain torrents. "Reach Saint-Maurice by the 13th," Berthier's chief-of-staff, General Pierre Dupont, wrote Lannes, "then the hospice at Great Saint-Bernard by the 14th. Move your artillery as soon as possible and get through the pass by one in the morning on the 16th." The army's chief engineer, General Armand-Samuel Marescot, had already reported that the roads, such as they were, narrowed from Geneva to Saint-Maurice, forcing horses and artillery to move in relays.[10]

The Austrians posed no problem yet but the geography certainly did. Passing through Villeneuve on his way to Saint-Pierre on 13 May, Lannes wrote to Berthier, "I never expected we'd have so much trouble with the artillery. . . . The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Chatillon
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supply trains are very slow and we're running short of everything, [and] I don't think there are more than 1,500 Austrians between us and Fort Bard." Berthier responded with caution. "I'm sending you the Piedmontese chef de bataillon Pavetti; he's from Aosta and well-known to the locals. Have him tell everyone in Aosta that an army of 100,000 is on the way."[11]

Following in the rear of the army slowly snaking its way up to the high passes, Victor commented on the formidable landscape. The mountain ranges, surrounded by steep gorges, loud, rushing torrents, and dark, impenetrable forests were "so sharp and serrated that they looked impossible to cross. Everywhere we found evidence of recent avalanches." At least Victor knew, from his vantage point in the rear, that the army was moving. Meeting the difficult terrain head-on, Lannes was not always sure he could push the advance-guard forward. After the tiny village of Saint-Pierre, only a narrow footpath wound along the escarpment to the hospice at the top of the Great Saint-Bernard pass. Local peasants cleared as much ice and snow from the tracks as they could. They also warned Lannes about avalanches, advising him to march at night or before the sun rose high enough to melt the snow and to avoid making any loud noises. Otherwise he should fire shots first to clear the way.[12]

The advance-guard marched more than twenty miles without roads, steadily climbing to a height of nearly 10,000 feet in four hours. They passed the hospice on schedule and without incident. From there Lannes faced another long march downhill to Aosta and the enemy. He encountered some Austrian outposts at Étroubles on 15 May but easily chased them off. Finding no other resistance between Étroubles and Aosta, he pushed on, expecting to link up in a day or two with General Joseph Chabran's division moving through the Little Saint Bernard pass to the southwest.[13]

"We reached Aosta at 11:00 a.m. [on the 16th]" Lannes reported, "and found [a Hungarian battalion] on the heights above the town. They retired into Aosta and put up some resistance at the bridge, but the 6th and 22nd from General Jean-Pierre Malher's demi-brigade repelled them easily. We had no casualties." According to an Italian historian, "the inhabitants of Aosta were very frightened when the French arrived. The bishop expressed their fears to the French commander [Lannes], who promised to treat Aosta as friendly territory. In spite of his assurances, each villager barricaded his door and shuttered his windows. The French marched through a ghost town." Perhaps the citizens believed Lannes's advance-guard was just the beginning of the 100,000-man army Berthier had promised.[14]

With Aosta secured the advance-guard moved on toward Chatillôn. Berthier was not concerned with Chatillôn; instead he sent word to Lannes about potential problems at Fort Bard, some thirty-six miles ahead. "Maintain your reconnaissance," he warned him, "and use the locals for information about the enemy's whereabouts . . . .Take enough supplies when you leave for Fort Bard; if it resists for several days, you'll be short otherwise."[15]

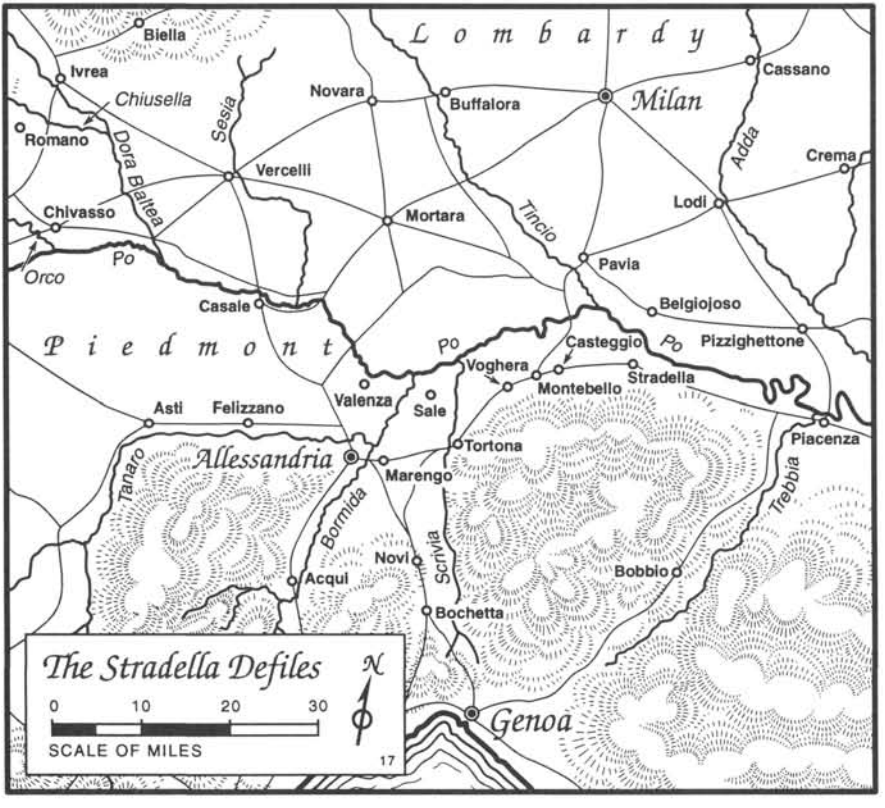
Though Berthier was not concerned with much besides the fort, Lannes found some 1,000 Austrians at Chatillôn when he reached it on 18 May. They had encircled the town on the heights above the Dora Baltea, cannon guarding the

bridge. Annoyed with the persistent resistance and impatient to reach Fort Bard, Lannes decided to attack in force. The grenadiers of the 22nd demi-brigade captured the bridge and swept into Chatillôn, scattering the defenders before them. Watrin, Mainoni, and Lannes's staff officers joined the 12th hussars in charging the enemy "just for the fun of it." The Austrians lost 100 killed, 300 prisoners, and the guns on the bridge, while the rest fled toward Fort Bard. The French had less than twenty wounded.[16]

Lannes left Chatillôn at dawn on 19 May, expecting to reach Fort Bard by nightfall. Although he knew how crucial capturing the fort was, Berthier made sure he understood the stakes: "The fate of Italy and perhaps the Republic itself depends on the capture of Bard." Brought up short by the terrain and General Stockard von Bernkopf's unassailable position overlooking the single road, Lannes had few options, regardless of the fate of Italy. He did what he could, sending a few grenadier companies to capture the bridgeheads and enter the town. However, he could not take the fort with grenadiers and a few artillerymen. Thinking ahead to the enemy on the other side, Lannes decided not to waste time in futile assaults. Advised by locals who knew the terrain, he led the advance-guard around Bard during the night of 20 May, following a narrow mountain track above the Albardo River. At Saint-Martin he ran into enemy outposts. The Austrian general de Briey defended the town with three infantry battalions, two cavalry squadrons, and two guns. The 40th Line and 6th *Légère* charged and scattered the numerically superior enemy at once, and de Briey quickly retreated toward Ivrea.[17]

With his cavalry and artillery pinned below Fort Bard, Lannes moved on to Setto-Vittone with the infantry, marching through narrow gorges along barely discernible tracks. The ten-mile march took more than five hours. Setto-Vittone was just a stop along the way to Ivrea, where the enemy waited in strength. Lannes sent a message to Berthier, asking for more artillery, cartridges, and supplies. "I've interrogated at least five prisoners who say there are three infantry regiments, two cavalry squadrons, guns, and more than 400 Savoyards at Ivrea. . . Melas must know how few of us there are—he's already left Nice and marching north. We can't delay reuniting our forces at Ivrea." Berthier missed the whole point of Lannes's report. "How can you be out of cartridges already? [Your] advance-guard has not yet fought," the shortsighted chief-of-staff replied, completely overlooking the confrontations at Étroubles, Aosta, Chatillôn, and Saint-Martin. Berthier also told Lannes to hold the gorges above Ivrea and deploy to offset the Austrian superiority in cavalry and artillery. He suggested that the advance-guard concentrate at Setto-Vittone, but said nothing about attacking Ivrea. Not certain whether the enemy had yet received reinforcements, Lannes sent a spy to Ivrea and left Setto-Vittone on 22 May. He decided to attack Ivrea, based on the spy's reports of enemy strength.[18]

The Austrians had retired into the town and its château to organize a defense. They lost the château to the bayonets of the 22nd *Légère* in less than two hours, and the town fell by midafternoon. De Briey left 300 prisoners and fourteen guns behind as he hastily retreated south to Romano. The French had only eight wounded, according to Lannes's sometimes fanciful estimates. The capture of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Milan
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Ivrea secured the route down from the mountains for the rest of the army and showed that Lannes did not always follow Berthier's orders to the letter. He thought remaining on the defensive at Setto-Vittone was pointless when an offensive action at Ivrea seemed a calculated risk worth taking. Had he waited, the Austrians could have been reinforced or at least had time to fortify their positions and delay the French advance.[19]

Remaining at Ivrea long enough for his cavalry and artillery to catch up with him, Lannes issued a proclamation to the inhabitants and orders to his troops. He assured the locals they had nothing to fear from the Armée de Réserve. "We're here to liberate you from the Austrian yoke," he wrote, and promised no harm to persons or property. He told the troops that "the inhabitants are our friends, [and] pillaging results in resistance. All generals and officers will be diligent . . . There will be unannounced inspections of every man's possessions each day—absolutely no exceptions."[20]

The cavalry and artillery arrived on 25 May. Lannes left at dawn the next day in pursuit of the Austrians, this time with Berthier's permission to attack. "We don't think the enemy has more than 8,000 troops, so you should attack . . . and force them to retire to Chivasso." De Briey's forces had gathered on the right bank of the Chiusella, less than three miles north of Romano. Reinforced by General Karl Haddick, 5,000 infantry, 2,400 cavalry, and four guns defended the bridge leading to Romano. Watrin, supported by General Jean Boudet's demi-brigades, attacked the Austrian redoubts head-on. The 6th and 22nd regiments swept the bridge, capturing the artillery and chasing the cavalry toward Romano. The 12th Hussars and 21st Chasseurs, crossing the Chiusella to the west, completed the job by defeating the Austrians on the plain.[21]

Lannes sent a message late on 27 May to the first consul that he was marching south to Chivasso to join General Turreau. He reached the right bank of the Orco later that day and found a small Austrian cavalry squadron. Instructed to convince Melas that the Armée de Réserve meant to capture Turin, Lannes chased the squadron off and stopped at Chivasso, less than twelve miles from the city. Bonaparte arrived the next day and reviewed the advance-guard demi-brigades.[22]

Not entirely misled by the French presence at Chivasso, Melas decided to assemble his troops in the Dora Riparia and Orco valleys, attack and defeat Lannes, then strike at the rest of the army to the east at Vercelli. Had Melas done so, he certainly would have destroyed the advance-guard. Melas decided to wait, however, after he read reports from de Briey and Haddick recounting their unsuccessful engagements with the French. He concentrated most of his forces at Alessandria and sent detachments to the Po's southern banks to stop a French crossing at Piacenza.[23]

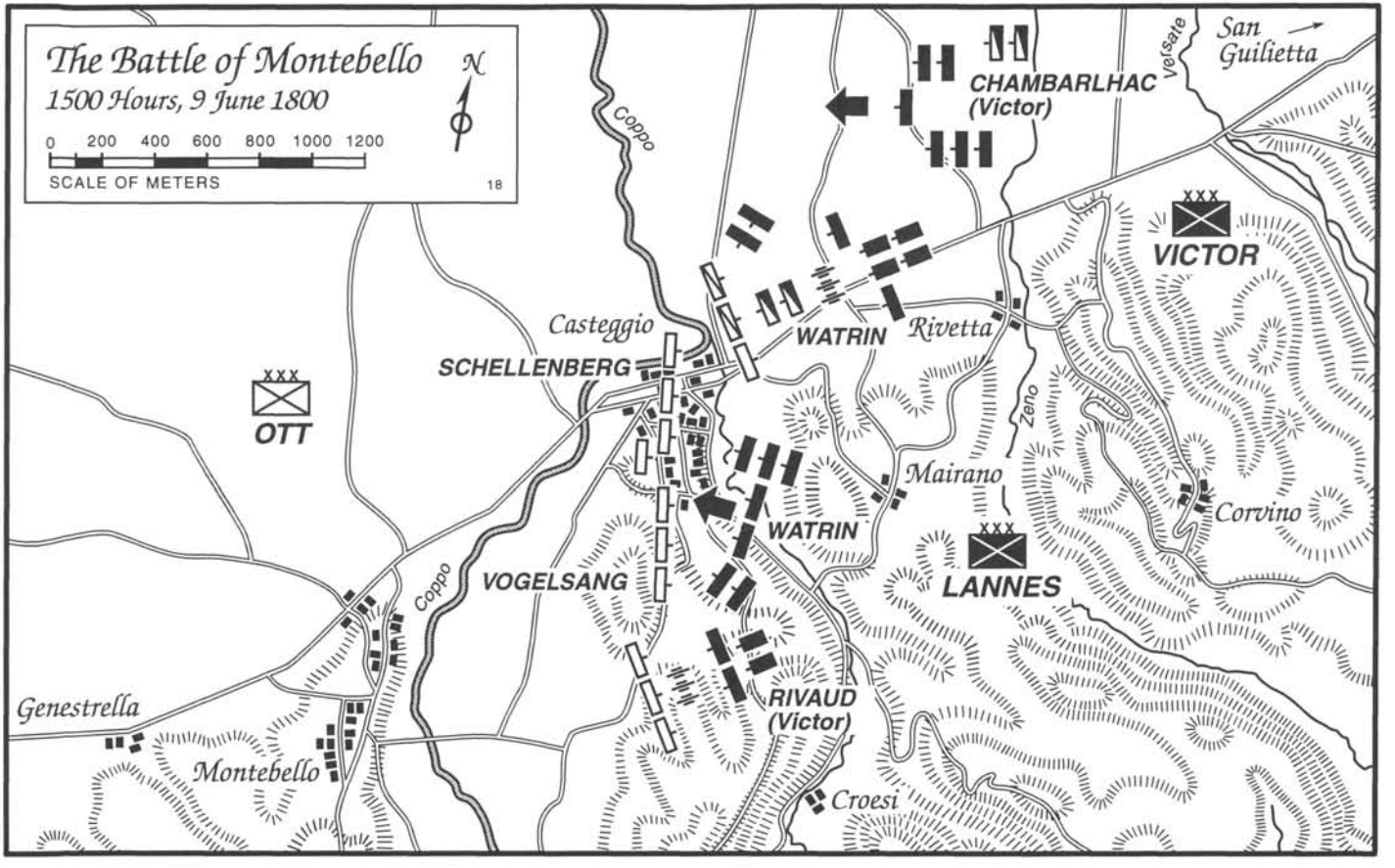
Saved by typical Austrian caution, Lannes left Chivasso on 31 May to join the rest of the army at Pavia. He knew he had to get there in record time and secure a crossing. Short of supplies, the army needed the provisions and ammunition stockpiled in Pavia, and needed to get them with no interference from Melas. Lannes also knew he was expected to halt any offensives the Austrians might launch. Under pressure and reminded of the high stakes by its commander, the advance-guard covered seventy-two miles in less than four days. According to

an eyewitness, the achievement was both glorious and exhausting, though he considered capturing one of the enemy's main depots worth the effort.[24]

Leaving his infantry sixteen miles behind at Mortara, Lannes galloped into Pavia with the cavalry the morning of 2 June. The town was a treasure-trove and, after counting the riches, he told Bonaparte what he found: "300 or 400 guns, including siege and field guns, with bullets, balls, shot, and powder . . . muskets and cartridges, bedding, grain, and more." Addressing the next item on his list of priorities, he asked an engineering officer to find boats and build a bridge over the Po. As an afterthought he added, "I'm sending you two letters [we took] from an Austrian general; because nobody can translate them, I have no idea what they say."[25]

The first consul wrote Lannes from Milan that Marmont and a bridge train were on their way to him. Leaving bridge-building and artillery transport to the engineers, Lannes left Pavia to cross the Po farther east near Piacenza. Victor joined him with Generals Gaspard Gardanne, Boudet, Jean-Charles Monnier, and Vital Chambarlhac, plus Murat with 3,000 cavalry. Bonaparte expected them all to cross the river by 6 June. South of Belgiojoso, Lannes stopped long enough to order pontoon bridges built for the cavalry and artillery, then implemented an impromptu ferry shuttle for the infantry. Nothing went smoothly for him that morning: the bridge work was slow, most of the troops grew restless in the heat waiting to cross, and the enemy moved closer by the minute. When the long, frustrating day ended, Lannes had just enough energy to send in the required report. "We were held up building the pontoon bridge; otherwise I could have gotten my whole advance-guard across in less than four hours. Then [General Andreas O'Reilly] attacked us at ten with 6,000 infantry. General [Jean-François] Noguès with a battalion of the 28th took them in the flank, and they retreated to Stradella and regrouped. We fought non-stop from ten in the morning until nine at night, finally forcing the enemy to flee along the road to Piacenza."[26]

Bonaparte had to get enough troops across the Po to hold the Stradella defiles and prevent an Austrian concentration, and he ordered Lannes to Stradella, where he halted at the hamlet of San-Cipriano the evening of 7 June. With just Rivaud's and Mainoni's troops but no artillery or cavalry support, Lannes did not think he could occupy Stradella. Berthier agreed, instructing him to deploy in a defensive position only and warning of the probability of attack by superior forces. Lannes had scarcely read Berthier's instructions when Bonaparte, convinced that Melas had not concentrated and therefore would not risk an offensive, sent new directives. Abandoning his barely established position at Stradella, Lannes set off for Voghera in search of the enemy. He stopped long enough at Broni to pass his orders on to Watrin's division, then crossed the Scuropasso, a small mountain torrent, with 6,000 troops and two guns. Berthier's order caught up with him late in the evening on the 8th, complaining that the Po crossing was taking too long and the army was behind schedule. He told Lannes to establish another defensive position at Casteggio and not move beyond it. "If the enemy attacks you before [the first consul] reaches Stradella, Victor will command because he is senior to you." Lannes had no idea Victor was on the way to reinforce him, nor that he would assume command in the event of a skirmish, combat, or other sort of


The Battle of Montebello
1500 Hours, 9 June 1800
0 200 400 600 800 1000 1200
SCALE OF METERS
18
N
Coppo
CHAMBARLHAC
(Victor)
Versate
San
Guilietta
XXX
VICTOR
Casteggio
SCHELLENBERG
WATRIN
Rivetta
XXX
OTT
Zeno
Mairano
WATRIN
Corvino
XXX
LANNES
VOGELSANG
Coppo
Genestrella
Montebello
RIVAUD
(Victor)
Croesi

confrontation with the Austrians. The question of seniority did not bother him at the moment; getting the upper hand with a numerically superior enemy seemed the more crucial issue.[27]

Lannes and Watrin reached Casteggio at dawn on 9 June. General Peter Karl Ott von Bátorkéz, recently arrived from Genoa, held Casteggio with 13,000 infantry, at least two cavalry regiments, and plenty of artillery. Behind him and across the Coppo River, five reserve battalions commanded by O'Reilly occupied the village of Montebello. O'Reilly had also placed his artillery at the château of Lordona on the heights between Casteggio and Montebello. Disregarding Berthier's instructions about defensive positions and in no mood to wait any longer, Lannes attacked the Austrians at eleven that morning with 5,400 infantry.[28]

The 22nd demi-brigade charged straight at Casteggio, General Claude Gency and the 6th demi-brigade swung to the south toward the Austrian artillery positions, and Malher, with the 3rd and 40th demi-brigades circled north to the heights above Casteggio. As Watrin reported later, "we endured heavy musket and artillery fire all day...[but] we attacked the heights as vigorously as the enemy defended them." The 22nd took the worst of the enemy's fire, outnumbered and outgunned in front of Casteggio. The heights above the town changed hands repeatedly; by midafternoon, the Austrian numerical superiority began to wear the French down. To the south Lannes and Gency could not silence the Austrian artillery with so few infantry and two guns. Just when Ott was claiming a decisive victory at three in the afternoon, Victor arrived from Broni with 6,000 reinforcements. He wasted no time with the formalities of command, turning his troops over to Lannes at once. Back on the attack, they chased the Austrians out of Casteggio, but stopped at Montebello because the infantry was exhausted and advances were impossible without cavalry and artillery support.[29]

Berthier reported statistics that evening: the battle lasted from eleven in the morning until eight at night; the enemy lost 2,000 killed or wounded, and 3,000 prisoners; the French lost 60 killed and 400 wounded. The Bulletin of the Armée de Réserve on 10 June commended the generals: "Victor and Chambarlhac performed very well, [and] Watrin showed talent and enthusiasm to motivate our troops."[30]

If he had to rely on Berthier's report or the army bulletin for accurate accounts of the day's events, Lannes would have to wonder if he had been at Casteggio and Montebello at all. Certainly he had to wonder who commanded the divisional generals so generously praised in the official reports and who had, by a distinct show of initiative, guaranteed victory in the face of significant odds. Much later, when proper credit no longer mattered, Napoleon interpreted both the battle and his subordinate's motivation: "Lannes was holding Casteggio for reinforcements; he was not interested in attacking, but the Austrian general [Ott] engaged him at dawn. . . . Montebello] was a bloody battle—Lannes was covered in glory, his troops the epitome of intrepidity."[31]

Victor thought because he was there and neither Bonaparte nor Berthier was, his opinion carried more weight. He gave Lannes credit for initiative and military skill. He also criticized later historians for their inaccurate, shortsighted accounts

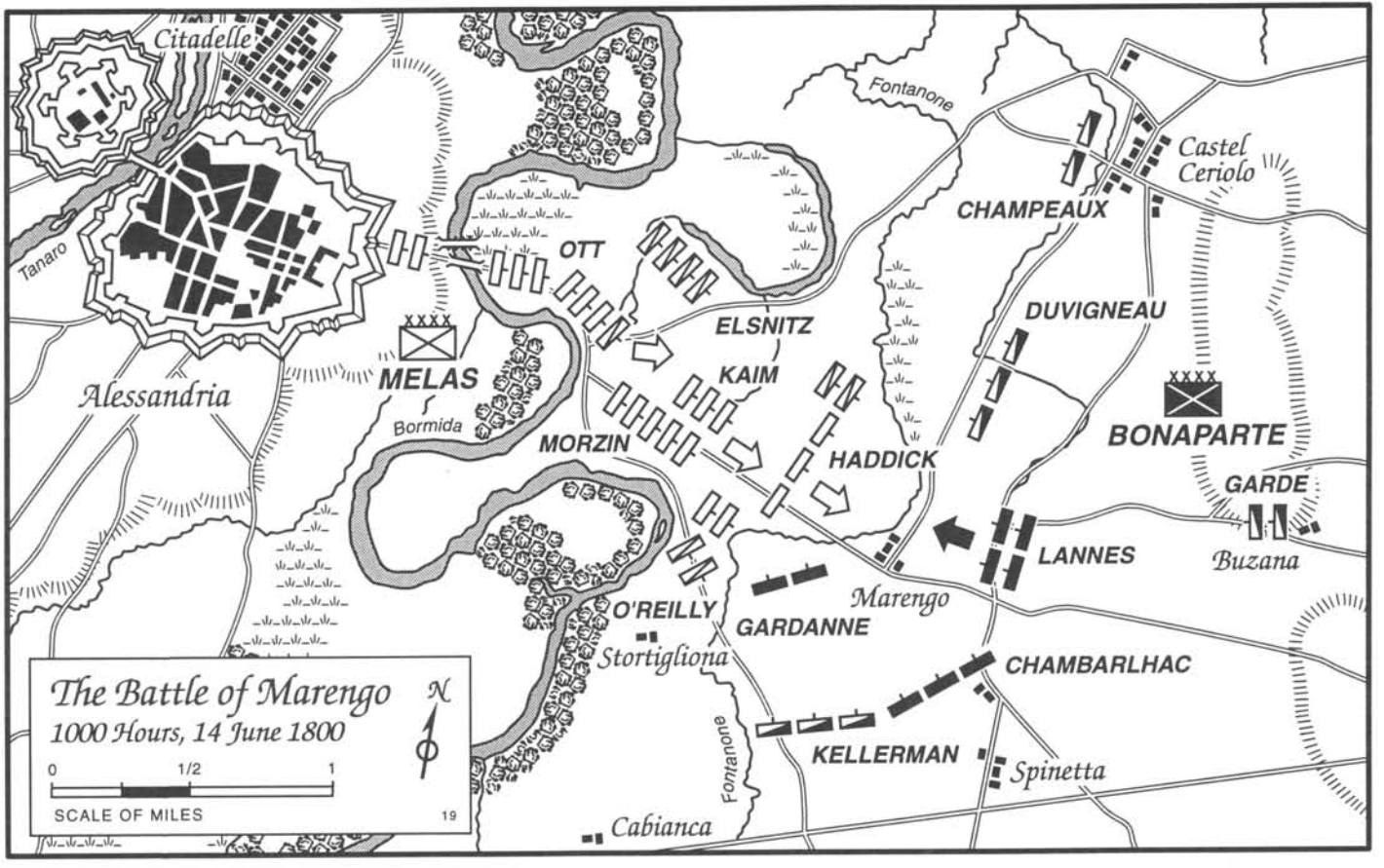
of the battle. Victor especially disliked Adolphe Thiers's version that claimed "the first consul arrived at the very moment the battle ended . . . [and] found Lannes covered with blood but drunk with joy, surrounded by his celebrating troops." Victor pointed out that Bonaparte was nowhere near Montebello, then went on to say "I don't remember if Lannes was 'covered with blood'; he probably *was* 'drunk with joy,' because for most of that day he didn't think he had a chance. No less loyal than he was fearless, when Lannes received his title of *duc de Montebello*, he said as he embraced me, 'My friend, I owe you my name!'" Lannes remained at Montebello for two days until Berthier told him to move on toward the Scrivia River. He followed Victor's corps at dawn on 12 June. Their quarry was Melas, still at Alessandria and now joined by Ott and O'Reilly after their retreat from Montebello. Lannes and Victor reached the Scrivia the next morning without seeing any enemy forces.[32]

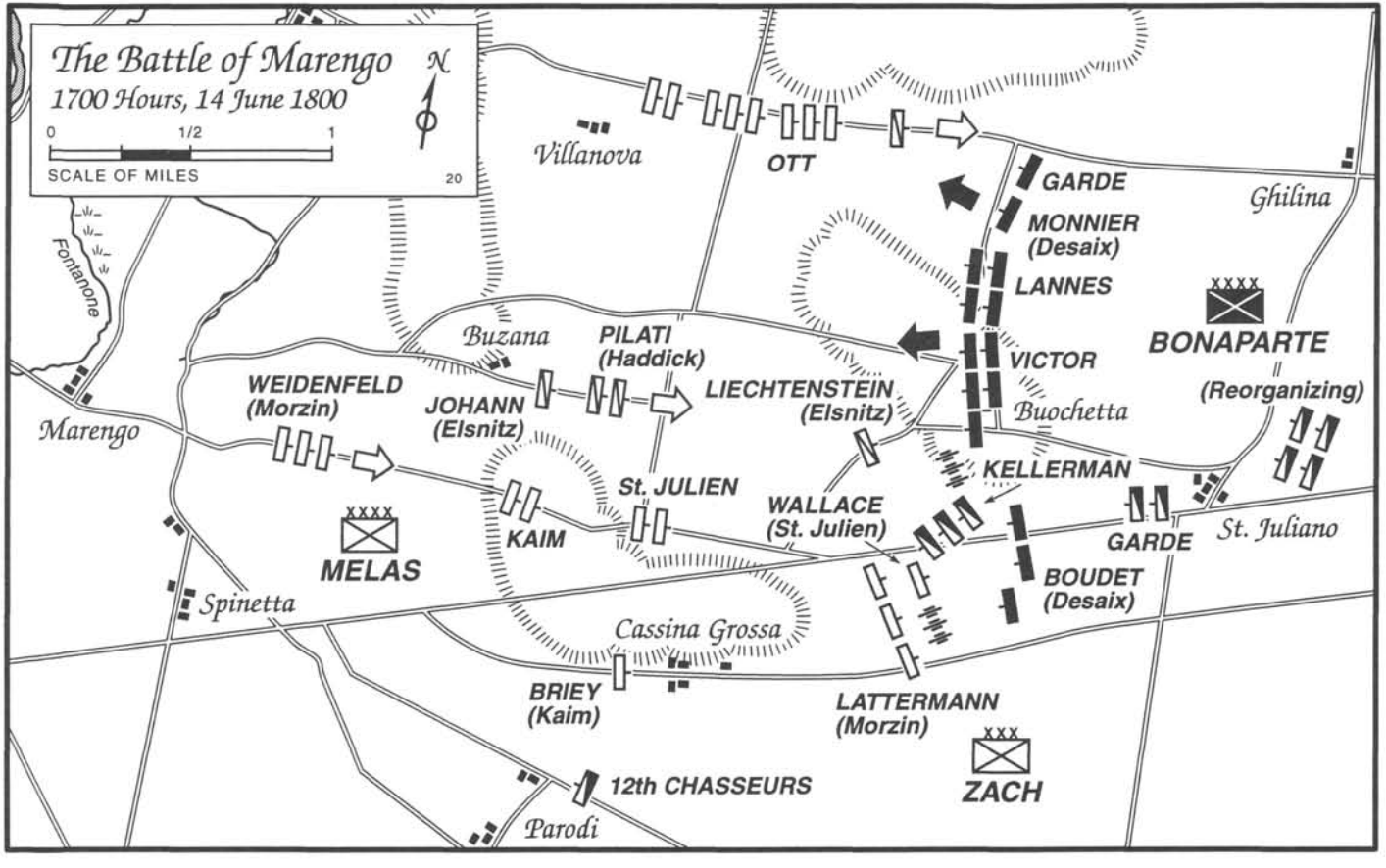
Headquartered at Torre-di-Garofoli, Bonaparte decided he could no longer delay a major offensive and was fairly certain Melas would not risk attacking him. Reinforced by the cavalry and artillery held up for weeks by the continued resistance at Fort Bard, the Armée de Réserve deployed on the plain east of the Bormida River and the little Fontanone Creek on the 13th. Lannes occupied San-Guiliano near the Scrivia with Watrin. Victor and Chambarlhac were at Marengo, facing the Austrians across the creek, while Gardanne, leading a new advance-guard, planned to cross the bridge over the Bormida to Alessandria. None of the generals really knew what to expect; the reports they received and sent were inconclusive with regard to the enemy's strength and intentions.[33]

At first glance, the terrain facing Alessandria seemed ideally suited for cavalry. However, the Austrians had more cavalry, and a closer inspection of the plain revealed deep furrows, uneven footing, and large areas reduced to a quagmire by late-spring flooding. The little Fontanone creek was like a ravine, with ten-foot banks and thick stands of trees and scrub bordering it. Although it might be a good line of defense for infantry, it could stop cavalry. Also at first glance the Austrians looked like they were preparing to abandon Alessandria rather than defend it. O'Reilly and Ott left during the night of 13 June, crossed the bridgehead, and settled down across the creek from Gardanne, who could see little in the dark. Almost five miles behind Gardanne at San-Guiliano, Lannes saw even less enemy activity and waited for daylight.[34]

The Austrians attacked at first light. For the next three hours Victor's troops at Marengo caught the full force of enemy fire. Pushed back by O'Reilly's offensive, Gardanne retired to Marengo. Only Fontanone Creek separated the combatants; every time the Austrians tried to cross, the French stopped them. The battle in this confined area became the scene of alternating gains and losses, with unrelenting cannon and musket fire punctuated by fierce bayonet charges. Leaving San-Guiliano, Lannes and Watrin joined Victor soon after ten o'clock, and by noon they had reached Marengo. Also by noon the Austrians split their forces, sending O'Reilly south of Marengo and Ott's stronger force north toward Castel-Ceriolo.[35]

The seriousness of the French position became obvious during a momentary lull in the early afternoon. Although Victor and Gardanne, reinforced by part of


Citadelle
Tanaro
Alessandria
Bormida
Fontanone
Castel Ceriolo
CHAMPEAUX
OTT
ELSNITZ
DUVIGNEAU
MELAS
KAIM
BONAPARTE
MORZIN
HADDICK
GARDE
LANNES
Buzana
Marengo
O'REILLY
GARDANNE
Stortigliona
CHAMBARLHAC
KELLERMAN
Spinetta
Cabianca
Fontanone
The Battle of Marengo
1000 Hours, 14 June 1800
N
0
1/2
1
SCALE OF MILES
19


The Battle of Marengo
1700 Hours, 14 June 1800
N
0
1/2
1
SCALE OF MILES
20
Villanova
OTT
GARDE
MONNIER
(Desaix)
LANNES
Ghilina
BONAPARTE
(Reorganizing)
Fontanone
Buzana
PILATI
(Haddick)
VICTOR
WEIDENFELD
(Morzin)
JOHANN
(Elsnitz)
LIECHTENSTEIN
(Elsnitz)
Buochetta
Marengo
KELLERMAN
St. JULIEN
WALLACE
(St. Julien)
KAIM
GARDE
St. Juliano
MELAS
BOUDET
(Desaix)
Spinetta
Cassina Grossa
BRIEY
(Kaim)
LATTERMANN
(Morzin)
ZACH
12th CHASSEURS
Parodi

Watrin's division and General Pierre-Clément Champeaux's cavalry, thought they could hold Haddick at bay a while longer, the real danger came from Ott. If he arrived as expected from Castel-Ceriolo with 7,500 troops, he could attack Lannes, overwhelm him, then strike at Victor. Bonaparte sent Monnier's division, his only readily available reserve, to reinforce Lannes, but he was still outnumbered. When he heard that Victor had been forced out of Marengo, Bonaparte ordered him back to San-Guiliano. Victor's troops, decimated and almost demoralized, retreated in a rush. Chambarlhac, evidently more frightened than his men, abandoned his division and ran for safety. Lannes was caught in the stampede. With less than 4,000 infantry left and only two guns, Ott bearing down on him from the right and Haddick to his left, he could not have held his position much longer. The retreat came at the right time. In the midst of the chaos Lannes and Watrin managed to enforce some semblance of discipline and kept the whole untidy force together. They crossed four miles of difficult terrain in three hours, Austrian guns firing at them with virtually every step. At least Melas did not send his cavalry in pursuit, or the reasonably ordered retreat would have become an undisciplined rout.[36]

Desaix's divisions and Marmont's artillery arrived sometime after five and changed the course of the battle. The fresh troops reinforced the hard-used infantry of Lannes and Victor, the artillery challenged the enemy, the cavalry got its second wind, Bonaparte ordered an attack, and they swept the Austrians off the field by nightfall. Nearly every French officer who was not too tired to think that night realized how close to disaster they had all come. Reports from the various divisional commanders streamed in after the battle while the first consul dictated his own version. This time he gave proper credit, remarking that Lannes "exhibited the calm of a seasoned general all day." Lannes sent in his report to Berthier the next day, doubtless too exhausted to worry about being prompt. "After more than eight hours *[sic]* of sustained fire from muskets and artillery, the Austrians broke through our center . . . I was nearly overrun [by Victor's troops and Ott's advance]. I ordered a retreat; it was completely orderly, even in the face of enemy fire. . . . When we were ordered to attack again in support of Desaix, my troops responded with courage and élan, pushing the enemy back to the Bormida." As his report shows, Lannes had lost track of time. At most, his divisions were under fire from ten until two but, under the circumstances, four hours probably seemed more like eight. He also overestimated the quality of the retreat. However, he more than likely kept some semblance of order by personal example.[37]

Marengo enabled Bonaparte to preserve his government and military reputation. Other reputations grew as well, because he usually remembered most of the officers who had served with him in this vital campaign. Desaix died gloriously—and conveniently—before Bonaparte had to acknowledge him as the battle's savior. General François-Etienne Kellermann's cavalry charges became legend, and Lannes's efforts were well recognized. However, the first consul ignored Victor, who had played a major part in the battle.[38]

Lannes did not ignore his friend, and spent the days after Marengo in Victor's company while they waited for new orders. The first consul's brother, Joseph

Bonaparte, joined them for several days and proposed a few excursions to relieve the boredom. On one occasion Joseph, Lannes, and Victor rode to Lake Maggiore, where they visited an aristocratic Italian family at their lakeside palazzo. Even though Joseph and Victor knew how to conduct themselves properly, their host's rather exalted rank made no difference to Lannes, who did not bother modifying his usual blunt manner. The hostess's frequent and extravagant praises of Austrian generals who had recently visited her irritated him. Shot at, shelled, and generally harassed by Austrian generals for more than six unrelenting and dangerous weeks, he was in no mood to listen to such drivel. He lost his limited patience when she extolled the enemy's great generosity and excellent manners. Cutting her off in midsentence with a rude gesture—at least he did not subject her to profanity just then—he abruptly left the room. He returned in less than fifteen minutes, hat full of gold coins. "Did they give you *this* much, your goddamned Austrians?" he snapped, tossing the coins on the noblewoman's damask cloth. "Not bloody likely, Madame! Why don't you give it to the poor?" The visit ended very shortly afterward. Victor remained behind in Lombardy while Bonaparte took Lannes with him back to Paris.[39]

Set down in the capital, a free man with time on his hands and no immediate prospects, Lannes bought a house near the place Vendôme with some of the "profits of war" he had acquired during the last campaign. It did not occur to him to return to Lectoure—his future, whatever it might be, depended on Bonaparte, and he intended to stick as close to him as possible. That was not as easy as it used to be. The first consul spent hours each day with administrative affairs, leaving little time for his military colleagues. If Lannes wanted to see him, he had to go to the Tuileries and wade though crowds of assorted dignitaries, officials major and minor, and distressing numbers of returning émigrés. He hated that and only went when there was not much else to do.

Bonaparte could juggle a multiplicity of matters at the same time and, in addition to the weighty issues of government, he decided to domesticate the senior officers who had served with him in Italy and Egypt. If they were single, and many were, he intended to marry them off to suitable young ladies who would refine them as much as possible. Bonaparte had a ready supply of potential matrimonial candidates at or graduated from Madame Campans' finishing school. That worthy Ancien régime lady had already done her best with Caroline Bonaparte, who decided the flamboyant Joachim Murat should be her graduation prize. The first consul bypassed Madame's girls and decided the daughter of a minor consular official would be the perfect match for Lannes. It evidently did not occur to him that this "perfect match" would need several postgraduate degrees in polite comportment and perseverance if she were expected to tame one of the roughest senior officers in the army. It also did not occur to him that Lannes might prefer to do his own matrimonial shopping without assistance from the head of state. Bonaparte was right, of course—if he told Lannes to marry Medusa, he probably would have done so.

The first consul's hopefully inspired choice was not Medusa but eighteen-year-old Louise-Antoinette Guéhénuec, daughter of a former Breton now in charge of managing government forests. Louise was not in Paris when her

probable future was being deciding at such a high level but tucked away in the country house of a family friend in Dornes, southeast of Paris. Though willing to do whatever Bonaparte wanted, Lannes was still gun-shy of women, the ink on his divorce decree scarcely dry. He agreed to the engagement but not just on his faith in the first consul's choice—he sent two of his friends, Generals Jean-Baptiste Bessières and Georges Frère, to check her out, praying she did not have two heads. Louise had only one, and a lovely one at that, the inspection team reported. Madame Junot, who could be charitable as well as vitriolic, said Louise was a copy of a Raphael Madonna, with a disposition to match. She also claimed Bonaparte had a high opinion of her, which was true enough then.[40]

Louise did not object to her blind date for life, or at least no one said that she did. Like well-bred bourgeois young ladies, regardless of the more liberal political and social climate, she doubtless agreed with her father that marrying a heroic and popular general who was the first consul's friend might not be a bad idea personally or in terms of her family's upward mobility. She had no reason to change her mind when she finally met Lannes, practically on the eve of the wedding. Though he lacked Murat's dashing flair and the dead Desaix's classic features, he could be very presentable when he wanted to. Not handsome in the accepted sense, he was still worth a second, even third, glance, with eyes to die for. Louise could have done much worse, and she knew it.

The wedding took place on 16 September 1800 at Dornes. It was no hastily arranged or hurried civil ceremony performed without parental approval. No less than fourteen witnesses made it legal, with at least three times that many family members, various relatives and friends, mostly on the bride's side, crowding around. It seemed like an auspicious beginning. Lannes's old friend General Augereau evidently thought so. He sent him a brief note congratulating him on his happiness, well deserved after his "recent misfortunes." Buried in the boondocks with a lovely young wife was just fine for a while, but after a week or so Lannes needed something else to do. The couple packed up and went to Paris and the house on rue Mont-Blanc.[41]

Generals on extended leave created their own diversions. Lannes did what his friends were doing and went to private dinners, receptions, and galas at the Tuileries, and smaller gatherings at Malmaison. Sometimes Louise accompanied him; when she did, she was a social success, partly for her own sake, but mostly because she managed to control her husband. His solo appearances, however, were guaranteed to enliven any function, no matter how formal. If the dinner conversation included any mention of the British, Lannes could be counted on to shatter the crystal with his opinions. Émigrés at the Tuileries provoked a similar reaction; he complained they were too much in evidence. He told M. de Caulaincourt in the middle of an interested crowd that the "goddamned Ancien régime officers sure knew how to look after their worthless friends." More spectacular, however, was the occasion when Bonaparte made him wait until he concluded an audience with an émigré. Lannes expressed his opinion of waiting and the émigré by throwing a footstool at a gilt mirror, shattering it. The story circulated for days.[42]

In spite of—or perhaps because of—these performances, Bonaparte included

Lannes as part of his regular circle. Usually this duty was boring, but on one occasion, it proved to be dangerous. The first consul ordered Haydn's *The Creation* performed at L'Opéra on Christmas Eve. Because he did not think they had anything better to do, he invited several officers, including Lannes, to dinner and then the performance. Lannes did not appreciate oratorios or indeed any other musical genre, but he went anyway. The evening was nearly derailed by an explosion in the rue Niçaise, another attempt on Bonaparte's life by yet another disgruntled faction. None of them were harmed and *The Creation* went on as planned after the first consul assured everyone he was just fine.[43]

After the first of the year, Bonaparte decided to reward Lannes with something more suitable than having him tag along to one function after the other, and named him commandant of the Consular Guard. It was a status appointment, similar to commanding the Praetorian Guards. Even though this honor guard was not doing much at the moment, Lannes could dress them up, drill them, and hold fancy reviews on the Champ de Mars. Bonaparte also suggested he buy a larger house, one more in keeping with his new position, and allegedly gave him some rather vague guidelines with regard to financing the Guard and the house.

Lannes bought a splendid house, fully furnished, on fashionable rue Saint-Dominique. With his domestic arrangements in fine shape, he turned to the Guard and went overboard with new uniforms, weapons, and accoutrements for the men. At least one guardsman was grateful for the commandant's attentions; now their beds were big enough to accommodate them, he said. Soon the expenditures totaled more than 300,000 francs, and when Lannes submitted the bills, the first consul was appalled. He swore he never authorized him to spend such amounts and gave him three weeks to repay the entire amount or face a court-martial. Lannes swore he *had* authorized every franc. Bonaparte would not argue, and banished Lannes from the Tuileries. Because the first consul refused to see him, Lannes resorted to letters as a means to express his wounded dignity. "I didn't spend a sou on my house or your Guard without your approval," he wrote. "You know I'm honest, and you know I'm not rich . . . the only things of value I have are the wounds I got on the field of honor—you can have the rest of my blood if you want it."[44]

Bonaparte's memory may have been faulty or merely convenient, or Lannes misunderstood or disregarded his orders. In any case, he had to repay the money. He had limited financial resources; even the sale of the new house and all its contents would not bring in half the sum owed. However, Augereau came to his rescue, lent him the money and graciously did not mention repayment. Lannes paid off his debts, and Bonaparte named Bessières as the new commandant. The first consul apparently also began to think that Lannes was a social liability at the increasingly aristocratic consular court, and that he should find him a place outside France where he could serve the interests of the French government and recoup his financial losses.

NOTES

1. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 143; Zins, *Favori*, 209.

2. L-M. Poussereau, *Histoire du maréchal Lannes* (Nevers, 1920), 41.

3. D'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, V, 265; Benjamin Constant, *Mémoires intimes de Napoléon Ier* (Paris, 1968), 64.

4. Archives Départementales, Auch, dossier du maréchal Lannes.

5. Archives municipales, Lectoure, *Procès du divorce du général Lannes*, par le notaire Montbrun. See also Damamme, *Lannes*, 81–2; Zins, *Favori*, 337.

6. Archives municipales, Lectoure, *Procès*; Général Gaspar Gourgaud, *Journal de Sainte-Hélène, 1815–1821*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1944), II, 110–11.

7. Gaspar-Jean-Marie-René de Cugnac, *Campagne de l'Armée de Réserve en 1800*, 2 vols. *Première partie: Passage du Grand-Saint-Bernard* (Paris, 1900), I, 2–3. De Cugnac pointed out that part of the reason Moreau's army was secondary to Bonaparte's plans arose from the animosity between the general and the first consul. Bonaparte knew Moreau was too popular to be removed, and Moreau threatened to resign before he would allow Bonaparte to command the Armée du Rhin. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 4651, Order of 8 March 1800, VI, 218. Victor said that Bonaparte had wanted a new army for at least a month prior to its creation. Claude Victor Perrin, *Extraits de mémoires inédits de feu Claude-Victor Perrin, duc de Bellune* (Paris, 1846), 89. For Lannes's orders, see de Cugnac, *Saint-Bernard*, I, 45.

8. Bonaparte explained his reasons in the "Œuvres de Napoléon Ier à Sainte-Hélène" in *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, XXX, 318. De Cugnac, quoting the relevant part of the Constitution, refuted Bonaparte's view. In any case, Berthier held the nominal command until 9 May 1800, when Bonaparte arrived at Lake Geneva. De Cugnac, *La campagne de Marengo* (Paris, 1904), 36–37. Victor said Bonaparte chose Carnot because he wanted "to win over this ringleader of zealous, opinionated republicans." Victor, *Mémoires*, 89. Even a cursory examination of the situation reports for the Armée de Réserve shows that what was the case for one biweekly period rarely guaranteed it would remain the same for the next. As de Cugnac also claimed, several historians said the army concentrating at Dijon was made up of raw conscripts and invalids, while the "real" army concentrated in secret at Geneva, to convince Austrian spies that the Armée de Réserve "existed only on paper." De Cugnac disputed this contention, because archival documents prove that the army was real, and at Dijon, not Geneva. De Cugnac, *Saint-Bernard*, I, 34–35.

9. Watrin's division consisted of three battalions each of the 6th and 40th Line and the 22nd *Légère* regiments, for a total of 6,527 men in 15 March and 9,102 by the 24th. These figures were on paper, not in the field. Watrin complained to Dupont that he had only 800 men of the 6th and asked for the rest as soon as possible. He also said provisions and the money to buy them were lacking. Service historique, Armée de Réserve, division Watrin, Correspondance de l'adjutant-général Hulin, chef d'état-major, 2°, 15 and 24 March 1800, Carton B^3*^ 320*. Victor, *Mémoires*, 104; Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance et ordres du général en chef Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 10 May 1800, Carton B^3*^ 236*.

10. Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Registre d'ordres de mouvements du général Dupont, chef de l'État-Major général, Dupont to Lannes, 10 May 1800, Carton B^3*^

318*. These same orders are included in *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 4772, to Lannes "par ordre du Premier Consul," 10 May 1800, VI, 331.

11. Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance et ordres du général en chef Berthier, Lannes to Berthier, 13 May 1800, Berthier to Lannes, 15 May 1800, Carton B^{3*} 236*.

12. Victor, *Mémoires*, 110, 121; De Cugnac, *Saint-Bernard*, I, 386, 301.

13. Victor, *Mémoires*, 122; de Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, p94–95.

14. Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance du général Berthier, Lannes to Berthier, 16 May 1800, Carton B^{3*} 236*. De Cugnac mentioned that Lannes's report was published in the 24 May edition of *Le Moniteur*. Cagliani, *Il passagio de Bonaparte per il Grande-Sant-Bernardo*, quoted in de Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 392, n. 1.

15. Victor, *Mémoires*, 122.

16. Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance du général Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 16 May 1800, Carton B^{3*} 236*.

17. Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance du général Berthier, Berthier to Dupont, 18 May 1800, Carton B^{3*} 236*. M. A. Thiers, *Histoire du Consulate et de l'Empire*, 21 vols. (Paris, 1845), I, 371; Victor, *Mémoires*, 123–24; De Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 104.

18. Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance du général Berthier, Lannes to Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 21 May 1800, Carton B^{3*} 236*; De Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 116.

19. Victor, *Mémoires*, 126; De Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 116–17.

20. The proclamation was published in *Le Moniteur* on 6 June 1800. Lannes did not write the proclamation itself; its grandiloquent language was far beyond his capabilities, and definitely not his style. Because several similar proclamations would be forthcoming during the campaign, one must assume that the Armée de Réserve had a public-relations officer on staff for the purpose of writing them when needed. See: *Gazette national ou Le Moniteur Universel*, 18 prairial an 8 [6 June 1800]. De Cugnac, *Saint-Bernard*, I, 475.

21. Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance du général Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 25 May 1800, Carton B^{3*} 236*. Casualty figures are always suspect, in this campaign as in any other. Watrin said the advance-guard lost 250, Berthier changed it to 200, Brossier said 300, and de Cugnac said 400. See Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance de division Watrin, 27 May 1800, Carton B^{3*}, 320*; Mémoires reconnaissances, Adjutant-commandant Brossier, *Journal de la campagne de l'Armée de Réserve*, Carton MR 468; Victor, *Mémoires*, 127; de Cugnac, *Campagne de l'Armée de Réserve en 1800, Deuxième partie: Marengo* (Paris, 1901), II, 14–15.

22. Victor, *Mémoires*, 341.

23. De Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 130–32.

24. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Brossier, *Journal*, Carton MR 468. De Cugnac said that Lannes was difficult to track after he left Chivasso, largely because of conflicting orders and reports coming in from a variety of sources. Tracing Lannes through the positions of Watrin's headquarters, with whom Lannes usually traveled, gives some idea of dates and locations, but frequently the advance-guard commander left even Watrin behind. For Bonaparte's rationale, see de Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 138; for Lannes's disappearing acts, see de Cugnac, *Marengo*, II, 87, n. 2. Bonaparte, evidently

knowing where Lannes was, sent him urgent messages to reach Mortara as soon as he could, and hurry on to Pavia. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 4861, Berthier to Lannes, 1 June 1800, VI, 410.

25. Lannes to Bonaparte, 2 June 1800, quoted in Victor, *Mémoires*, 348.

26. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 4880, Berthier to Lannes, 4 June 1800, VI, 423; Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance du général Berthier, Lannes to Berthier, 6 June 1800, Carton B^{3*} 236*. See also Victor's account: Victor, *Mémoires*, 147–48.

27. De Cugnac said that the geographic situation at San-Cipriano replicated Essling, and Lannes, with his advance-guard scrambling to cross the Po to reach Stradella, was as vulnerable at San-Cipriano as he would be nine years later. De Cugnac also believed Lannes should have occupied Stradella immediately. De Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 153–54. He also said most of the confusion about the orders resulted from Bonaparte's presence in Milan, where he had no idea of the difficulties of the Po crossing. The first consul apparently thought most of the army was across at Belgiojoso, when in fact only two divisions had gotten across. De Cugnac, *Marengo*, II, 219, n. 2, and *Campagne de Marengo*, 164.

28. For the orders sent out to Lannes on 7 and 8 June, see Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance du général Berthier, Carton B^{3*} 236*. Victor arrived on the battlefield in the early afternoon. His and Watrin's are the only firsthand accounts of the French and Austrian dispositions. Victor, *Mémoires*, 150–51.

29. De Cugnac stated that he would not debate whether the engagement at Montebello was a *bataille* or a *combat*. He cited *Victoires de l'armée française 1214–1885*, prepared by the ministère de la guerre in 1886, that lists Montebello as a battle. As he pointed out, Bonaparte himself considered it as a battle. Regardless of the semantics, the encounter was an all-day affair. De Cugnac, *Marengo*, II, 219, n. 1. See also Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Division Watrin, Correspondance, Watrin to Dupont, 10 June 1800, Carton B^{3*} 288*; Victor, *Mémoires*, 154.

30. De Cugnac, *Marengo*, II, 202. For historians who overlook Victor in favor of Lannes, see Thiers, *Consulat et empire*, I, 424; Chandler, *Campaigns*, 288. Both authors overstate the case somewhat.

31. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, "Œuvres de Napoléon Ier à Sainte-Hélène, XXX, 381 and 452.

32. Victor, *Mémoires*, 241. Victor particularly disliked Thiers's account of the battle. The historian, writing about Marengo and Desaix's contributions, claimed that "Desaix's military talents equaled those of Moreau, Masséna, Kléber, Lannes." Thiers, *Consulat et empire*, I, 424–26. Victor responded, accurately enough, by pointing out that "Lannes, divisional general for only a short time . . . had not yet demonstrated the talents that would place him in the first ranks of Napoleon's lieutenants, in spite of his incomparable valor. To place him in 1800 on the level with Masséna, Desaix, Moreau, or Kléber is an anachronism. However, I concur with this 'anticipated' homage; I cherish the memory of this heroic man more than the accolades given him by M. Thiers." Victor, *Mémoires*, 213. See Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance du général Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 11 June 1800, Carton B^{3*} 236*.

33. De Cugnac, *Marengo*, II, 341–42.

34. De Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 222; Victor, *Mémoires*, 253–54.

35. Victor, *Mémoires*, 254–55; de Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 224.

36. Victor, *Mémoires*, 255; de Cugnac, *Campagne de Marengo*, 222–23.

37. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 4910, Bulletin of the Armée de Réserve, 15 June 1800, VI, 453–56; Service historique, Armée de Réserve, Correspondance du général Berthier, Lannes to Berthier, 15 June 1800, Carton B^{3*}, 236^{*}.

38. Victor, *Mémoires*, 276.

39. Joseph Bonaparte was evidently fascinated by this visit, because he included it in detail in his memoirs. Rather than criticizing Lannes for his anti-social behavior, Joseph was impressed. He wrote that the incident typified Lannes as a "republican soldier during these heroic times [for whom] material interests were nothing and patriotic spirit was everything." Of course, Joseph did not mention where Lannes got the gold coins. Joseph Bonaparte, *Mémoires et correspondance*, I, 84.

40. Poussereau, *Histoire*, 65; D'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, IV, 290–91.

41. Poussereau, *Histoire*, 69; Archives municipales de Dornes, Acte de mariage, 16 septembre 1800.

42. D'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, III, 291–92; IV, 23–24.

43. Constant, *Mémoires intimes*, 81–82.

44. Jean-Roch Coignet, *Les cahiers du capitaine Coignet* (Paris, 1968), 39. Méneval claimed that Bonaparte had promised to pay all of Lannes's "house-furnishing expenses," but refused when the bills submitted were far more than he had expected. Méneval also noted that Lannes "was accustomed to give and spend without counting, and had no idea at all of business." Claude-François Méneval, *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte and the Court of the First Empire*, 3 vols. (New York, 1910), I, 166.

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Chapter 5

A Military Bull in a Diplomatic China Shop: Lisbon, 1802–1804

How can anyone ever hope to listen to this minister
who begins every conversation with the most outrageous threats?
—de Souza to Talleyrand

Lannes received official notice of his career change on 14 November 1801; the order announced he was now minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary to the Portuguese court in Lisbon. He had no idea what this grandiloquent title meant and even less about what he was supposed to do. Talleyrand gave him a crash course in basic diplomacy—none of the lessons would stick. Bonaparte explained that while the position paid a mere annual salary of 80,000 francs, it did have several lucrative commercial perquisites that, if he were clever, would pay off his debt to Augereau. The rest of Bonaparte's instructions were not particularly helpful. He made sweeping and imprecise statements about "cultivating cordial relations and commerce that the recently concluded peace has established between the French Republic and Portugal." Lannes was by nature not cordial, and he was a soldier, not a merchant. Talleyrand added some flowery phrases about Lannes's "brilliant services," and how the court at Lisbon was getting "one of [France's] most distinguished officers" as ambassador. Lisbon was actually getting the equivalent of a cruise missile, but no one realized that just yet.[1]

Lannes did not feel brilliant or distinguished. He felt hurt and betrayed, and no amount of cajolery from Bonaparte was going to make this exile palatable. He tried to get out of it by pleading ill health, but everyone knew there was not a thing wrong with him. When that did not work, he decided he might as well be honest. He made sure his injured feelings were a featured topic at several dinner parties in Paris, including one hosted by Joseph Bonaparte.[2]

Lannes stopped complaining when he realized it was not working and when he discovered he was expected to make preparations for his new position. He

found out that the Lisbon legation had no more than a skeleton staff and no residence suitable for a minister. It took him all winter to choose a house long-distance and organize additional staff. He chose Jean-François Fitte de Soucy, son of an aristocrat and his friend since the first Italian campaign, as legation secretary. He added his personal secretary, Alexandre Heim, his aide, Captain Subervie, and half a dozen young military officers. With this group, the ambassadorial residence would resemble a bivouac in no time. The British ambassador in Lisbon, John Hookham Frere, found out about who was coming almost as soon as Lannes did, and expressed his opinion to Whitehall. "General Lannes is attended by a M. Fitte, [who] is to be Secretary of Legation, and it is supposed he will be charged with the real management of the business, for which his principal [Lannes] appears to be very eminently unqualified, at least if what is reported of the vanity and insolent presumption of his character is in any degree to be credited."[3]

Lannes did not just arrive in Lisbon on 26 March 1802—he made an entrance. *Le Moniteur* reported that the new ambassador was well received by the Portuguese court, and the prince regent had expressed his satisfaction with the first consul's choice. British newspapers made snide comments. "Greater honors were paid to [Lannes] than are generally rendered to the diplomatic rank which he holds, he being only envoy and minister plenipotentiary." Having royal coaches wait on Lannes's arrival from noon to ten at night also demonstrated "unprecedented honors." When Lannes presented his diplomatic credentials on 29 March to the prince regent at Queluz, "never were such pains taken to receive, in the most marked and magnificent manner, any foreign ambassador." Hookham Frere was annoyed that he had not received such a welcome. He noted that although Lannes brought gifts guaranteed to dazzle the diplomatic corps, he was obviously ignorant of the finer points of diplomatic finesse, protocol, and court manners—worse, he did not even seem to care. Lannes had instructions to advance French interests by whatever means the situation required. Because he was first and last a military man, diplomats and courtiers thought he would do so at the point of his sword.[4]

At least Lannes had been briefed on the minefield he was walking into. There was the weak prince regent, Dom João, son of an insane queen and husband to Carlota Joaquina, possibly the ugliest royal in Europe. There were the prince's ministers, stodgy, devious, and devoted to the long tradition of Anglo-Portuguese friendship. There was the British ambassador, clever, accomplished, and used to the diplomatic milieu. Finally, there were French émigrés, rich, favored at court, holders of key government posts. The prince and his ministers did not concern Lannes much; they could be bullied, if it came to that. He hated the English, and planned to humiliate and undercut Hookham Frere at every opportunity. He hated émigrés even more, and intended to boot every one of them out of Lisbon. Well aware of his rights and honors as the French Republic's representative, he swore to make everyone respect them and him, one way or the other.[5]

Lannes met with the anti-French minister of foreign affairs, Dom João de Almeida Mello e Castro, on 25 March, then had an audience with the prince regent at Queluz four days later. Right away he decided Almeida was "an English pawn

and a lying scoundrel," but having gotten his boots inside the minister's door, he let him know how things were going to be. He insisted the émigrés and their regiments leave Portugal, all French goods enter duty-free, and Dom João dismiss Minister of Customs and Police Chief Dom Diego Pina Manique immediately. In the future, he said, he would address issues with the prince regent because he had no confidence whatever in his ministers. Dealing with Dom João might not be much better, however, because he was "a total nonentity—all he wants to do is hunt, then sing and have people tell him how good he is."[6]

Lannes did not intend to hide his straightforward intentions behind meaningless civilities and excesses of *politesse* as everyone else in Lisbon was apparently doing. As Madame Junot observed, "he did not understand the art of disguising his sentiments. . . . One may readily suppose that in the midst of a foreign court, where obsequious manners above all things are considered a duty, [he] would appear somewhat singular." Behind all those polite diplomatic and ministerial faces lurked the soul of a spy; at least that much did not escape his notice. Within three days of his arrival in Lisbon, he told Talleyrand that his dispatches were being intercepted and read. He was right, because Almeida and his crony Hookham Frere read them before Bonaparte did. He decided to have the legation encrypt most of them, or those he felt were particularly sensitive. Even that was no guarantee of security.[7]

After just a week in Lisbon Lannes knew he had made a bad career move. "The Portuguese government is nothing and England is everything. I'm going to have to wage a perpetual war with the Portuguese cabinet. . . . Lisbon's full of petty intrigues and double-dealing, and I've got no use for any of it—I should've gone to Constantinople." If he thought Lisbon was bad, Lannes would have never survived at the court of Selim III, where Ottoman talents for double-dealing were legendary. The sultan and his ministers probably ate rude ambassadors for breakfast.[8]

Lannes declared immediate war on Pina Manique, who had fired the first shot when he impounded the ship carrying, among other things, the ambassador's clothes. Although Pina Manique threatened to arrest anyone trying to remove anything from the ship, Lannes managed to secure the release of his personal belongings after they had been thoroughly inspected by a platoon of customs agents. The battle with Pina Manique, fought mostly on paper among Lannes, Almeida, Dom João, Talleyrand, Bonaparte, and anyone else who would listen, stretched into late spring. Hookham Frere kept count, telling his government that Lannes sent no less than three or four notes a day to Almeida about Pina Manique and the customs debacle. Even legation secretary Fitte said, "the bizarre Portuguese customs allow duly accredited representatives to be detained as if they were prisoners. One cannot, as a result, obtain the necessities of life without a special order from the Portuguese ministry."[9]

While the war dragged on, the prince regent reluctantly granted Lannes several audiences, fearful of threats and all sorts of undiplomatic behavior if he refused. Dom João's command of French was so shaky that he never understood much of what Lannes said. Of course Lannes spoke like he fought—impetuously, rapidly, coarsely, without finesse, and right in Dom João's face. Present at most of

these early audiences, Almeida told Hookham Frere that "Lannes's ignorance of the common forms of good company give him an air of violence and arrogance." Almeida disliked Lannes personally and professionally, and reported to the Portuguese ambassador to France, Dom José Maria de Souza, that "the general has voiced complaint after complaint, made threat after threat. . . . [We] are more than willing to accede to his reasonable requests, but we see that he ignores our wishes, misconstrues our intentions, scorns our customs, refuses to accept ministers as intermediaries, and insists on meeting with the prince regent directly." Almeida also suggested that de Souza and Talleyrand handle matters in Paris and cut Lannes out of the diplomatic loop.[10]

Lannes knew he had a long way to go, and wrote Talleyrand another status report detailing his uphill climb. "The Portuguese ministers are nothing but English servants, but I think the prince regent might see things my way—only if I use firm language, of course . . . .I'm surrounded by enemies." Whereas Talleyrand might have an idea what Lannes meant by "firm language," neither Dom João nor his court had yet seen the full spectrum.[11]

They knew, however, that the ambassador had a notoriously short fuse. Almeida in particular thought he could exploit it to force some sort of explosion resulting in Lannes's hasty departure from Lisbon, under his own steam or recalled by his embarrassed government. Pina Manique was delighted to provide the match, and practiced first on Lannes's aide Subervie. Challenged by police patrols as he strolled through the Lisbon streets one night, Subervie got tired of their heavy-handed questioning, drew his sword, and a brawl resulted. The patrol hauled him before the magistrate, the émigré Marquis de Novion, who apologized and released him. Lannes refused to let the incident go, as Pina Manique hoped. "They tried to assassinate him—he's alive only though blind luck!" Lannes exaggerated, and sent the first of many strongly worded notes to the prince demanding the immediate removal of Pina Manique. If Dom João refused, then he would leave Portugal. Dom João made all sorts of vague promises that his ministers had no intention of letting him keep. Faced with Lannes's obdurate demands, the prince called on the papal nuncio, Galeppi, to mediate the escalating dispute. It was a bad choice in light of the ambassador's dislike for clergy—any clergy. Galeppi told Lannes if he left Lisbon under such distressing circumstances, he would rupture diplomatic relations. "Rupture, hell!" Lannes snapped. "It's a declaration of war."[12]

He made sure the prince regent understood—again—each reason for his displeasure, jumbling personal insults "to me and mine" with "grave offenses against the French Republic." Dom João tried to placate him by politely dancing around the issues while Almeida dished out platitudes and made certain de Souza and Talleyrand were suitably informed. Stonewalled and furious, Lannes grabbed his credentials and left Lisbon on 10 August, scarcely five months after his much-heralded arrival.[13]

Instructed by his government to tell the whole story, de Souza gleefully informed Talleyrand that Lannes had been looking for an excuse to leave Portugal from the day he had arrived, and the "Subervie incident" was just a pretext. He said Almeida was "embarrassed and perplexed" by Lannes's behavior, and the

prince regent thought he had been "abrupt and unconventional." Talleyrand told Bonaparte the ambassador was on his way home, but the first consul already knew; Lannes had ridden faster than the diplomatic couriers, and had sent Fitte ahead with letters of explanation. Hookham Frere sighed with relief and reported that "the alarm which the general's departure has occasioned is now much diminished, and the general opinion and expectation is that since this affair may be attributed solely to the intemperance of [Lannes's] character, it is not likely to lead to any important consequences."[14]

Talleyrand had been busy giving Bonaparte an edited version of events, then had the pleasure of writing to Lannes that the first consul "disapproves of your conduct . . . and wishes you to remain where you are at Vitry-sur-Seine, [since] he will not see you until this situation is resolved." At first Bonaparte seemed to agree with his minister's assessment. "Lannes violated all the usages and forms [of diplomacy] by abandoning his post without specific orders from his own government . . . his imperious manner and brusque departure from the court was wrong." He did not think much of Almeida either, and weighed in on his disgraced ambassador's side with a demand to have him replaced.[15]

Forbidden to come to Paris, Lannes resorted to impassioned pleas from exile. "Please listen to me! I did what honor and the interests of state required," he wrote, "and that should count for more than anything Talleyrand and de Souza tell you." His protests had no effect that he could see, because Bonaparte refused to see him. Trapped in a diplomatic and personal limbo, Lannes waited, something at which he had never been good. Evidently he had his sources for useful information, because he learned that his fate had become a betting proposition. De Souza reportedly paid Talleyrand 4 million francs to guarantee the ambassador never returned to Lisbon. "Damn fools!" Lannes scoffed when he found out. "They should have paid *me* instead."[16]

The British prayed that Lannes's diplomatic career was over. Hookham Frere wrote that "it has been reported that General Lannes was to return in his official capacity, but Almeida assures me he does not believe there exists any such intention at Paris." Almeida's role as decision maker and British protégé was uncertain, however. Sifting through conflicting reports and cutting through diplomatic obfuscation, Bonaparte decided Lannes had been right all along and demanded that Dom João dismiss Almeida. Switching sides, Talleyrand told de Souza the Portuguese government's evasiveness on this issue was unreasonable and unwarranted. Though it would take a few months to get rid of him, Almeida's usefulness had ended.[17]

The two governments agreed that Lannes would return to Lisbon in the spring of 1803. Dom João was not happy—he had declared he would cheerfully sacrifice both Almeida and de Souza rather than have this irascible ambassador back in Portugal. Bonaparte reassured the prince that all would be well, and gave Lannes a refresher course in diplomacy before sending him back. "Use moderation in all circumstances and conform to the customs of the country. See the ministers, confer with them politely, and talk as little as possible about state affairs with the prince regent . . . he complained about the scenes you made at the palace. . . . Don't do that again."[18]

Lannes made no promises with regard to moderation and manners, and he thought prudence was out of the question. He ignored Bonaparte's advice, sharpened his sword, and returned to Lisbon on 10 March 1803. "I came back because the ministers who kept me from doing my job promised to let bygones be bygones," he wrote Talleyrand. "Besides, the first consul personally authorized me to force them to make good on their promises." If *force* was the operative word, then the Portuguese court was in for a rough ride.[19]

Hookham Frere had been recalled shortly after Lannes's departure. The new ambassador, Lord Robert Stephen Fitzgerald, was no improvement—he had the same unrelenting animosity toward the French that Lannes had for the British. Fitzgerald was a both an aristocrat and a career diplomat; for the most part, his manners were courtly and urbane. He had a "large and tactless wife, a big family, and no money," but his government and many Portuguese aristocrats approved of him. The two diplomats headed for a collision; the Portuguese court and the French and British governments held their collective breaths and waited for the fireworks to begin.[20]

The prince regent, his ministers, and the court left Lisbon for the palace of Salva Terra to spend the Lenten season. Fitzgerald thought Dom João was conveniently hiding until "the bustle which General Lannes's return may create to pass off with as little notice as possible." He added that Dom João promised him he would not allow Lannes to visit his private residences and hold him to "ordinary channels of [diplomatic] communications." Fitzgerald was clearly delusional; so was the prince, for that matter.[21]

Dom João returned to Queluz on 14 March, within striking distance of the French ambassador. Rather than requesting an audience, Lannes gate-crashed his way into Queluz and found that the court had returned to the palace of Bem Porto in Lisbon. He left the list of demands he had prepared—by now he could write them without thinking—with a servant, who dutifully sent it to the prince. Dom João spent several days dithering about opening it or sending it back unread. He finally read it, more afraid not to, caved in, and granted Lannes an audience. While the French ambassador ticked off his requirements for Portuguese neutrality, Almeida's dismissal, and equal status for the French Republic, Fitzgerald hurriedly met with Almeida. They discussed the rupture of the Peace of Amiens and, not surprisingly, Almeida said, "the language of the French minister toward England [is] extremely hostile." Fitzgerald agreed, saying the ambassador seemed "to take a peculiar satisfaction in rendering himself conspicuous by the absurdity of his language and his general conduct."[22]

Though he refused to abandon his "in your face" methods, Lannes decided he might as well exploit the social aspects of diplomacy, and spared neither effort nor expense. By the end of March, he was holding open house at the ambassadorial residence, then moved on to formal dinners, concerts, and balls. This lavish display of Gallic fashions, elegance, élan, and cuisine succeeded. The Portuguese aristocracy, once dismayed by his arrogance and lack of social graces, now competed for invitations, came early, and stayed late. They also thought their own functions were incomplete without his presence and inundated him with invitations. Rarely invited, Fitzgerald condemned the fickle aristocrats for their

hypocrisy and fawning submission to the French ambassador's gaudy displays.

Lannes was not fooled by warm responses to his social overtures and frequent audiences with the prince regent. He reiterated his previous demands and complained to Dom João that "new insults have been added to the old ones—I can't keep quiet about it any more." If this was his version of keeping quiet, then Dom João was horrified at the prospect of what Lannes might do if he decided to *talk*. The prince capitulated on all fronts. He forgot his earlier promise to exclude Lannes from the private royal residences and invited him to Queluz and Mafra. Fitzgerald discovered that because these audiences excluded Almeida he could not find out what Lannes and Dom João discussed. In truth, Lannes discussed and the prince listened. De Souza reported to Talleyrand that Lannes "simply will *not* conform to the customs of diplomacy and the court . . . he is haughty, uncivil, and cuts the prince regent off in mid-sentence." Lannes did not care what anybody thought as long as his tactics of intimidation worked. He also thought Dom João was a distressingly slow learner.[23]

The resumption of war between Great Britain and France after the breach of the Peace of Amiens resulted in increased diplomatic correspondence from Lannes, increased confusion in the Portuguese court, and increased worries for Fitzgerald. Though Almeida could tell him nothing useful, Fitzgerald knew something momentous was occurring, and fretted over his lack of information. Almeida did not let his ignorance stop the flow of his correspondence. He claimed his reports and those of Fitzgerald were necessary to "keep pace with General Lannes and the need to administer the antidote to the poison that distills from the false, scandalous and mischievous reports that he sends to the first consul." Evidently the ambassador did not believe that gentlemen do not read other gentlemen's mail, but because he hardly considered Lannes a gentleman, he had no qualms about his own snooping.[24]

Lannes and Fitzgerald continued their vitriolic diplomatic pas-de-deux throughout the summer. Most contemporary observers gave Lannes the victory, although some deplored the triumph of gutter tactics over ambassadorial finesse. Two examples illustrate the heights—or depths—the French ambassador felt obliged to reach to ensure his own and his nation's preeminence among the credulous Portuguese and their British allies. The contest between the ambassadors' wives was really no contest at all. On any state occasion, Madame Lannes outshone Lady Fitzgerald because she was elegant, clever, lovely, and exercised tact and discretion at all times. Lady Fitzgerald was awkward, obstinate, excessively haughty, fat, plain, and unfashionable. Attending the opening night of the opera in Lisbon as the honored guests of the prince regent, the French ambassador and his wife completely eclipsed their British counterparts. The Portuguese nobility dearly loved a show of beauty, grace, and conspicuous consumption, and Lannes was not above putting his best foot forward—not his own in this case but his wife's. There was also the famous—or infamous—incident of the two coaches passing on the way to Queluz, jockeying for position on the road and in the prince regent's regard. Fitzgerald kept to his right of way, but Lannes deliberately sideswiped him, sending his coach into the ditch and injuring his dignity.[25]

Dom João finally dismissed Almeida in August because of continued pressure from Lannes and the first consul. Fitzgerald and Almeida were fooled until the end. "There is no validity to the rumors that Almeida is to be removed," Fitzgerald claimed. "He is too firm in his place and too well established in the favor and confidence of his sovereign to be shaken by the menace and ill-humor of one who would not only remove the servant but the master too." Almeida's replacement was the Vicomte de Balsamaõ who, if not pro-French, at least did not consider Lannes his enemy. Fitzgerald lamented Almeida's loss and believed Portugal had fallen into the hands of "those who showed a disgraceful and abject submission to a foreign power." Evidently submission was fine as long as the foreign power was Great Britain. Lannes had to be content with the fact that Pina Manique lost his job as minister of customs; he remained head of the police, however. The government also strongly urged the last of the émigrés to leave Portugal. As much as he might like, Lannes could not take all the credit. Most of these changes resulted from a few strongly worded notes from Bonaparte. The effect was the same, regardless of how it had been achieved.[26]

Dom João placated the British as he congratulated himself for having survived the French ambassador's frequent salvos. He was wrong, of course; the match was not over. Lannes presented a new list of grievances, written this time for the sake of diplomatic protocol. His prose was as blunt as his speech. He blamed the English for breaking the Peace of Amiens—"they never honored the provisions anyway." He pointed out that British ships in Portuguese ports violated Portuguese neutrality, especially when those ships captured French goods and imprisoned Frenchmen. He accused the Portuguese government of deploying for war in the middle of peace, of granting lucrative posts to "crowds of rebellious émigrés," and of welcoming the enemies of France. He told Dom João to stop encouraging de Souza in Paris to attack him in Lisbon. Finally, he stated that none of these issues were negotiable, and told the prince to respond to each with a simple yes or no. He said he would wait and then send Dom João's answer straight to the first consul.[27]

The prince regent wrung his hands. Obviously dismissing Almeida and his finance minister, de Souza Coutinho, expelling émigrés, chastising Pina Manique, and giving Lannes all the audiences he wanted was not enough. Balsamaõ commented that Lannes's "extraordinary note . . . seemed more an anticipated declaration of war than an official note expressed in suitable terms." Dom João also did not understand that *yes or no* meant exactly that. He vacillated for days while his remaining ministers wrote letters full of masterful diplomatic double-talk to all interested parties, explaining that the points Lannes had mentioned simply did not exist, or at least not in the manner in which he had presented them. Bonaparte believed his ambassador, however, and ended the impasse. Dom João gave in again, Fitzgerald spluttered, and Lannes wrote that "English influence wanes while ours increases."[28]

Because he clearly could not beat Lannes, Dom João decided they might as well be friends. The prince did not understand halfway measures; he cultivated the French ambassador assiduously. He gave Lannes a diamond-studded portrait of himself, an interesting present, as the prince was hardly good-looking. He gave

him free run of various palaces, and volunteered to be godfather to the ambassador's second son. Lannes took it all as a matter of course, but could not resist bragging to Talleyrand. "Dom João invites me to stay at Mafra with him," he wrote. "The Spanish and English ambassadors showed up once when I was there—the prince made them stay in a nearby convent." Fitzgerald was positively livid. The partiality, increased personal invitations, and "sums of money . . . lavished upon [Lannes] by way of compensation for pretended dupes" nearly drove him crazy, and occupied the bulk of his dispatches to Whitehall. No adolescent girl dumped by the school jock could have shown more petty spitefulness than did the British ambassador.[29]

Lannes knew Dom João's amiability meant little so long as his ministers did not share it. However, he took advantage of his favored status to suggest a treaty of neutrality between France and Portugal—it was, after all, one of the main reasons he was in Lisbon. He asked Talleyrand for assistance, but the minister ignored him. More concerned with a treaty between France and Spain, Talleyrand intended to keep him dangling. Lannes discovered what Talleyrand was up to because the ingenuous Dom João told him. He expressed his frustrations to his father-in-law first, complaining that "I never heard the first word about a treaty with Spain, but it doesn't surprise me—Talleyrand has always wanted to stab me in the back. . . . I wish the first consul would get rid of this asshole." Though relatives might be sympathetic, they could do little to help. Lannes knew that, and wrote directly to the source of his problem, telling Talleyrand in considerable detail all about the duplicity, malfeasance, and outright bribery that had occurred during his stormy mission to Lisbon.[30]

The Machiavellian master lost no sleep over Lannes's denunciations, but he thought he ought to put a more positive spin on them before Bonaparte asked any pointed questions. "I am used to [Lannes's] style of writing, [and] I hardly think his complaints, reproaches, or the insults with which his dispatches abound are subjects for discussion by either you or me. I therefore disregard this strange polemic [he has just written], and do not see a single point that warrants your attention." The first consul disagreed and wrote to Dom João, insisting on de Souza's immediate recall. De Souza appealed to Talleyrand, who said he would take care of everything. Bonaparte won, of course, and Lannes was free at last of his Portuguese enemies.[31]

Down but not out, Talleyrand decided a separate treaty with Portugal might not be a bad idea. He pirated the results of Lannes's negotiations with the prince regent, but never meant to share the credit. Fitzgerald viewed the prospect in the darkest light, and no one could better express diplomatic gloom and doom in such inflated, weighted verbiage. "I see not how this country [Portugal] may escape the dire calamity attendant on so flagrant a dereliction of the true principles of neutrality and friendship that have so long united her in the ties of amity and good understanding with her ancient ally," he wrote to his government. With no friends at court, Fitzgerald fumed as the prince regent invited Lannes to Mafra for extended visits. Although "the sports of the field seem now solely to engross his attention," the ambassador reported, "[Lannes] is really at Mafra because the treaty is being discussed in cabinet there. . . . Acquiescence to the treaty will result

from Balsamaõ's personal influence over Dom João and the dread of the French minister that operates equally upon them all." There was something to be said, after all, for dragging one's sword down the marble steps of palaces and sending ruling princes into panic attacks. There was little to be said for courtly phrases and obsequious manners that did not result in documents littered with seals, ribbons, and signatures.[32]

The prince regent signed the treaty of neutrality on 19 December 1803; with no more spies at court, Fitzgerald still had not seen a copy by the end of January. He claimed the prince regent approved it only because of Lannes's "usual threats and hostility, including sending an order to General Augereau and the Army of Bayonne to prepare to invade Portugal." He should have waited, however, because Bonaparte thought some of the provisions could use a little improvement. He told Lannes to amend it with specific terms more favorable to France.[33]

The subsequent diplomatic maneuvering lasted two months. Fitzgerald hung about on the sidelines and sent worried dispatches resulting in instructions from Whitehall and Downing Street. His government asked the impossible—get a copy and, while he was at it, copies of all other official communications between Portugal and France. Armed with as much information as he could get one way or another, he would then insist on an audience with the prince regent. Finally, the British government made certain he understood that any Portuguese subsidies paid to France were "an act of aid to His Majesty's enemies, [that] would therefore entitle His Majesty to consider Portugal itself as an enemy." Fitzgerald did not see how the strong position he was expected to take had any chance. He pointed out that the prince regent "seldom appears without Lannes at his side. He sends him invitations to all functions, and even has him to dine, an honor and distinction never before practiced by the prince of Portugal, [a privilege] which has not even been granted to HRH the Duke of Sussex, or [certain] of the prince's own relations."[34]

Dom João signed the new improved treaty on 19 March 1804. Fitzgerald said the treaty's success was due entirely to Lannes's "resolution of treating only with the prince in person, to whom he has free access, which gives him a decided advantage over me, who must, of course, be governed by the rules of decorum and respect." Had the ambassador been willing to drop his decorum and engage in a bit of brawling, he might have been more successful. Had Lannes relied on such rules, he would have grown very old in Lisbon without accomplishing a thing. Instead, he proved that a blunt, single-minded, and totally unvarnished approach could work. Few followed his example, however.[35]

Successful, vindicated, and jubilant, Lannes thought he should share his triumph with somebody. "I did the impossible—got the best advantages for our commercial interests and damaged British influence in Portugal," he wrote to his father-in-law. "Fitzgerald does everything he can to discredit and insult me, [but] he's just a dog whose bark's worse than his bite."[36]

Lannes thought it was time to go home now, partly because First Consul Bonaparte had become the Emperor Napoleon, partly because he saw no further use for his diplomatic skills. "I've fought at your side for the last ten years, shared your dangers, spilled my blood for you" he wrote to the emperor, exaggerating as

usual. "Nobody deserves to be with you now more than me." "I'm stuck here in the most secluded corner of Europe, missing everything, including the chance to pay my respects to the Emperor," he complained to Talleyrand. "I'm requesting my recall." He had to wait several weeks, but finally presented his letters of recall to Dom João on 18 July and went home.[37]

He left behind a diplomatic battlefield littered with corpses and enough stories to keep future receptions and dinners going for months. He left traditional British influence in shambles and Fitzgerald hors de combat. He left timid Dom João as his friend, though the prince had not fully recovered from the sustained shocks to which he had been subjected for months. Lannes repaid the friendship by refusing to command the Army of Portugal because he wanted no part of spearheading an invasion of the country whose ruler was his friend. He went home to the emperor who would continue to look after his interests, though he agreed Lannes had had enough of diplomacy for several lifetimes. He also went home to Talleyrand, the "piece of shit in a silk stocking" who he had outmaneuvered as neatly as an enemy army corps. No one else in any civilized nation's diplomatic corps, however, emulated Lannes's methods.

NOTES

1. France, Archives Diplomatiques, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (hereafter cited as Affaires Étrangères), Correspondance politique: Portugal, MSS, Order, 14 November 1801, vol. 122. The thirteen pages of "Le projet d'instruction pour le général Lannes," dictated by Bonaparte to Talleyrand, included such pointers as "cultivate both friendly and commercial ties," "reestablish peace," and "realize that the ancient political alliance with England has been resumed." Specific items, few in number, included a list of who was who in Portugal and what sort of power and influence each man held. Ibid., Talleyrand to Lannes, 15 November 1801.

2. Lannes had written to Talleyrand on 14 November, promising to do as good a job as ambassador as he had done as a soldier, and expressed appreciation for Bonaparte's confidence in him. Less than two weeks later, Lannes was attempting to renege. "I cannot accept for reasons of ill-health, [so] I am returning your instructions." Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Talleyrand, 14 November and 26 November 1801, vol. 122. Méneval, who was also a guest of Joseph Bonaparte's, said the general was very outspoken and sarcastic about the way he thought he had been treated. Méneval, *Memoirs*, I, 167.

3. Great Britain, Public Record Office, London, MSS (hereafter cited as P.R.O.), Foreign Office (hereafter cited as F.O.), Portugal, 63/39, Hookham Frere to Lord Hawkesbury, 19 March 1801. The official residence selected for the new ambassador was a "spacious and beautiful house, one of the best in the Portuguese capital, situated by the Fountain of Loretto, near the Opera House in the vicinity of the Tagus," as Madame Junot described it. When her husband became ambassador in 1805, they lived in the same house. D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, II, 286. It is fortunate that when Lannes admitted defeat and told Talleyrand he would go to Portugal, he asked that Heim be added to the embassy staff. The secretary's penmanship was a model of clarity, and his spelling flawless. Affaires

Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Talleyrand, 27 December 1801, vol. 122.

4. *Le Moniteur*, No. 191, 11 germinal an 10; *Cobbett's Annual* Register, Vol. I, January–June 1802 (London, 1802), 468; P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/39, Hookham Frere to Almeida, 31 March 1802. Lannes's sword became the visible symbol of his mission, noted by contemporary French, British and Portuguese observers alike. He wore his saber at all times, refusing to replace it with a smaller, decorative one for court appearances. Noticing immediately what sort of effect it had on the timid prince regent, for instance, Lannes seemed to take a perverse pleasure in dragging it through the halls of various Portuguese palaces and scaring Dom João into submission. According to Madame Junot, Dom João remembered that Lannes "used to carry a very large saber, which made a great deal of noise as he came up stairs." Obviously, the "great saber," with its ability to accelerate diplomatic business, left a "profound impression in the memory of the prince." D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, II, 307.

5. D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, II, 240. The observant Madame Junot wrote that "only those who knew Lannes can form a just idea of the hatred he bore to England. . . . He disliked *all* the English embassy." Lannes understood the situation in Lisbon within days of his arrival. A year later he was saying the same thing. "England's inimical influence is nowhere as apparent as it is here in Lisbon," he wrote to Bonaparte. "The Portuguese ministers are either blindly stupid or receiving stipends from George III. . . . In any case, their feelings and actions are clearly pro-British and anti-French." Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Bonaparte, 3 April 1803, vol. 124.

6. Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Bonaparte, 24 August 1803. It was several months later that Almeida confided to Hookham Frere the details of Lannes's audience with the prince regent. According to Almeida, Lannes told Dom João bluntly that because he had no confidence whatsoever in the Portuguese ministers, he would speak only with the prince. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/40, Hookham Frere to Hawkesbury, 19 June 1802. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Talleyrand, 27 March 1802, vol. 123. Lannes did not bother to alter his opinion of Dom João after they met.

7. D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, II, 240. Lannes was correct in his assessment of the breach of diplomatic security. Many of his letters were intercepted and read on the way to their destination, copies made and given to Almeida, who obligingly handed them over to the British ambassador. For this reason, a significant amount of Lannes's correspondence appears in the Public Record Office. Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Talleyrand, 27 March 1802.

8. Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Bonaparte, 19 April 1802.

9. Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Almeida, 6 and 11 May 1802. Hookham Frere, informed of everything relating to the French ambassador, reported that Lannes sent Almeida no less than three or four notes a day about Pina Manique and the customs contretemps. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/40, Hookham Frere to Hawkesbury, 26 May 1802; Alfred Dumaine, "Le général Lannes à Lisbon," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 42 (1928): 119.

10. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/39, Almeida to Hookham Frere, 29 April 1802; Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, de Souza to Talleyrand, 23 May 1802. The

chain of complaints was coalescing early on: Almeida to de Souza to Talleyrand, with side trips to the British ambassador. Almeida had also warned de Souza that Lannes considered him as France's "most outspoken enemy." Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Talleyrand to Bonaparte, 28 June 1802, vol. 123.

11. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Talleyrand, 20 April 1802, vol. 123. Had this been a dispatch intercepted by the Portuguese, the prince regent and his ministers would have been forewarned of what "the firmest language" entailed. Madame Junot certainly knew; she recounted that of every three words Lannes spoke, two were profanity. D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, II, 334.

12. For the highlights of this incident, see P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/40, Hookham Frere to Hawkesbury, 12 June 1802; Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Bonaparte, 30 May 1802, de Souza to Talleyrand, 15 June 1802, Almeida to de Souza, 10 June 1802, Talleyrand to Bonaparte, 28 June 1802, vol. 123. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Dom João, 30 July 1802. Lannes also warned Talleyrand of what he might do, and to have a replacement for Lisbon available. Talleyrand should not have been unduly surprised when Lannes made good on his threat to leave. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Talleyrand, 27 July 1802.

13. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Dom João, 30 July 1802, vol. 123. Almeida cheerfully handed over the passports, along with a flowery and insincere note. As usual, he provided the British with a copy. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/40, Almeida to Hookham Frere, 10 and 13 August 1802. The British ambassador thought a recounting of all of Lannes's grievances in chronological order, with additional comments on the reasonableness and forbearance of the Portuguese government, might entertain his government. His dispatch was nineteen pages long.

14. Lannes traveled faster than the Portuguese diplomatic dispatches, and arrived at Orléans on 25 August. He sent Fitte on to Paris with explanations. Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Bonaparte, 25 August 1802; Dom João to Bonaparte, 19 October 1802. See also P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/40, Hookham Frere to Hawkesbury, no date.

15. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Talleyrand to Lannes, 1 September 1802, vol. 123; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 6253, Bonaparte to Talleyrand, 15 August 1802, VIII, 718. Talleyrand followed suit when he summoned the chargé d'affaires in Madrid to fill in at Lisbon. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Talleyrand to Herman, 14 September 1802, vol. 123.

16. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Bonaparte, 1 September 1802, vol. 123. See Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Bonaparte, 29 March 1803; Méneval, *Memoirs*, I, 171.

17. The wishful and erroneous thinking on the part of both the British ambassador and the Portuguese minister would soon result in several embarrassed notes on the part of the former, and the dismissal of the latter. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/40, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 11 December 1802. Fitzgerald seemed completely in the dark when he later reported that "General Lannes will not be suffered to return, and Almeida will keep his place." Ibid., 63/41, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 9 February 1803. Fitzgerald was very concerned about both Almeida's and de Souza's positions. He was equally concerned about French troops collecting in the Pyrenees, which he believed were there either to menace

Portugal directly into compliance with French demands or as part of a general but unspecified French conscription. He chose to believe the former. Ibid., Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 2 January and 22 February 1803.

18. Dom João was deliberately vague in his promises, but the essential meaning was clear: he was afraid of Lannes, but absolutely terrified of Bonaparte's displeasure. Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Dom João to Bonaparte, 19 October 1802. Bonaparte told Talleyrand that he thought Lannes should return to Lisbon as soon as possible, because he still had his uses there. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 6537, Bonaparte to Talleyrand, 12 January 1803, VIII, 219. Officially it seemed more diplomatic to blame the entire situation on Lannes's "illness" rather than on his unconventional behavior. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Talleyrand to de Souza, 14 January 1803, vol. 124; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 6540, Bonaparte to the prince regent, 14 January 1803, VIII, 222. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Bonaparte to Lannes, 13 May 1803, vol. 124.

19. Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Talleyrand, 7 November 1803.

20. Fitzgerald held the same diplomatic status as Lannes. Appointed 25 November 1802, Fitzgerald presented his credentials to the prince regent on 1 December. If Hookham Frere harbored animosity toward Lannes, Fitzgerald would soon be reduced to a state bordering on apoplexy by the French ambassador's methods and eventual successes. Also, as much as Hookham Frere's dispatches were clearly written and relatively free of hyperbole, Fitzgerald's were models of obfuscation and invective of the highest order. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/40, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 3 December 1802. Madame Junot said that Fitzgerald's polished manners and dignified addresses hid his animosity. However, Lady Fitzgerald's "hatred of France caused her to assume . . . the air of a fury." Madame Junot loved to joke about the hapless Fitzgerald and his wife, whom she considered only slightly less unattractive than the wife of Dom João. D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, II, 240.

21. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/41, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 3 March 1803.

22. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Bonaparte, 25 March 1803, vol. 124. Fitzgerald probably wanted the letter read as much as anyone. If Dom João did not read it, then Almeida could not pass its contents on to the British. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/41, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 19 and 27 March 1803, 13 February 1804.

23. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Dom João, 28 April 1803, vol. 124. Fitzgerald surmised that the point of these meetings was an attempt by Lannes "to extort money for his own private use and profit." He also complained to Almeida that he wanted the same consideration from the prince regent or else he could not consider himself "on an equality with the French minister." P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/41, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 16 April 1803; Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, de Souza to Talleyrand, 5 April 1803.

24. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/41, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 8 June and 22 July 1803.

25. Lady Fitzgerald regarded sweet manners and admirable beauty "as so many faults in a Frenchwoman," and clearly never tried to be charming herself. The triumph at the opera must have repaid Lannes for all the times he felt slighted when Fitzgerald took precedence on "all points of etiquette." D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, II, 240. Fitzgerald himself never seemed to mind recounting to his government in lengthy detail the slights he

received—or thought he received—from the Portuguese court, and the "unfortunate" preference shown to his adversary. Lord Hawkesbury's patience with the petty diatribes of his ambassador must have been enormous. P.R.O./F.O, Portugal, 63/42, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 31 October 1803.

26. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/41, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 23 April 1803. Fitzgerald tried unsuccessfully to deal with Balsamaõ, and reported that the minister's weakness and vacillation would have dire consequences for Portugal and its alliance with Great Britain. "He is the avowed partisan of France," he warned his government. Ibid., Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 20 and 30 August 1803; 63/42, 31 October 1803. In spite of his immediate successes, Lannes refused to be satisfied as long as Pina Manique remained in *any* official capacity. "Pina Manique is still here and...they have chosen the very moment of my return to make him a Grand Chancellor of the kingdom!" Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Bonaparte, 21 March 1803, vol. 124. Bonaparte subjected Dom João to official pressure regarding Almeida. "As long as Almeida, completely devoted to England, remains in his position, it is impossible to consider Portugal either neutral or friendly." *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 6979, Bonaparte to the prince regent, 4 August 1803, VIII, 556. Bonaparte had more to say: "I insist that de Coigny and all those who foment brigandage in France be arrested." Ibid., No. 6978, Bonaparte to Talleyrand, 4 August 1804, VIII, 555.

27. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Dom João, 6 September 1803. The resourceful Fitzgerald was furnished a copy of these demands, which he sent on to London at once. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/42, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 6 September 1803.

28. The Portuguese ambassador to Great Britain was the former finance minister, de Souza Coutinho. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/42, Balsamaõ to de Souza Coutinho, 11 September 1803. Oddly enough, the complete copy of Balsamaõ's reply to both Lannes and Bonaparte is in the Public Record Office. Ever diligent, Fitzgerald sent it on to his government. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/42, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 8 September 1803. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Bonaparte to Dom João, 27 September 1803, Lannes to Talleyrand, 9 October 1803. vol. 124.

29. Perhaps the portrait of the prince regent required a plethora of diamonds to make it presentable. Dom João must also have had a corner on the diamond market; he gave Lannes three large handfuls at the baptism of "le petit Alfred." Fitzgerald saved his best invective for his dispatch recounting the event. He said that Lannes received treatment heretofore accorded only to members of the royal family, and noted that the entire diplomatic community attended the dinner given the evening of the baptism and, worst of all, seemed to enjoy themselves immensely. See Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Bonaparte, 27 July 1803; P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/42, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 29 September 1803. For the Portuguese version of this occasion, see Angelo Pereira, *Dom João, Principe e Rei,* 2 vols. (Lisbon, 1953), I, 101; Damiao Peres and Eluetério Cerdeira, *História de Portugal*, 8 vols. (Barcelos, 1928), VI, 292–96. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Talleyrand, 20 October 1803, vol. 124. This particular gift reinforced Fitzgerald's idea that Lannes had never wanted anything more than money—and plenty of it—from the Portuguese. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/42, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 31 October 1803.

30. The Franco-Spanish treaty contained Article VII, which stated that Portugal would pay a subsidy of $12 million in return for French and Spanish guarantees of its neutrality. There were no commercial matters addressed. See de Clercq, *Receuil des traités*, II, 83–84. See also Thoumas, *Lannes*, 96.

31. Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Talleyrand, 10 November 1803, Talleyrand to Bonaparte, 28 November 1803; de Souza to Talleyrand; Talleyrand to de Souza, 29 November 1803, vol. 124.

32. P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/42, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 14 and 26 November 1803.

33. It is somewhat amazing that Fitzgerald, who did not have a copy of the treaty, informed his government that Lannes's personal share of the "plunder" generated by the treaty amounted to at least £1.5 million, "though many say it is closer to £2 million." Ibid., 63/43, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 7 January 1804.

34. Ibid., 63/43, Downing Street to Fitzgerald, 21 January 1804; Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 13 February 1804. There were setbacks, because Lannes insisted on immediate signatures. As dilatory as Lannes was straightforward, the Portuguese took their time. Balsamaõ informed Lannes that the treaty must be debated in cabinet first, and the debates lasted weeks. However, Lannes was present to hurry things along as much as possible.

35. *Cobbett's Political Register*, 24 March 1804, V, 464; de Clercq, *Receuil des traités*, II, 86–87. The British ambassador also reported that Dom João left for his villa at Salva Terra for "a sporting excursion, to which he has invited General Lannes, alone of all the foreign ministers!" P.R.O./F.O., Portugal, 63/43, Fitzgerald to Hawkesbury, 12 March and 11 April 1804.

36. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 98.

37. Archives Nationales, AF IV, Carton 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Napoleon, 6 June 1804; Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique: Portugal, Lannes to Talleyrand, 21 May 1804, vol. 125.

Chapter 6

The Sun and a Few Stars: Austerlitz, 1805

Commanded by Marshal Lannes, the left moved out as if it were on parade.
—30th Bulletin of the Grande Armée

Lannes returned to Paris at the end of September 1804, expecting a reward for his tedious months in a diplomatic purgatory. In case Napoleon might have forgotten where his real talents lay, Lannes had already reminded him in a letter replete with flattery and blunt military language, most of it misspelled. Busy with plans for the coronation, Napoleon made no commitment. He did continue to choose Lannes for odd jobs; he sent him with Augereau to welcome Pius VII to Fontainebleau in November. He could not have picked better emissaries—the two most outspoken anti-clerics in the army. Because Napoleon knew the pope had come under duress, perhaps he expected the marshals to keep the Holy Father in line.[1]

Although several marshals had been chosen for specific roles in the coronation, Lannes was not one of them. Napoleon did not entirely trust his devoted but unruly military friend to conform to the sanctity and pomp of the occasion. He also might have thought the marshal would prefer to stay home, because his wife expected their third child at any moment. Nothing could be further from the truth—although he felt slighted by the emperor's neglect, Lannes would probably have thought parading down the center aisle of Notre-Dame wearing velvet knee breeches and a plumed cap more suited to his wife's maid too ridiculous for words. The baby arrived two days later; his father celebrated not by staying home but by going to the Tuileries. Joined by several marshals and generals who had not been in Paris the previous May, he took the required oath of loyalty to the emperor—a showy ceremony, to be sure, but unnecessary in his case. The next day Napoleon staged another impressive ceremony on the Champ de Mars as he handed out the eagle standards to deserving, well-dressed commanders and regiments.[2]

Galas, fêtes, and other pleasant diversions out of the way, Napoleon turned his attention to the army on the northern coasts and issued a blizzard of orders. On 22 March 1805, Lannes got his reward—commander-in-chief of the 4th Corps, chosen as the advance-guard for the invasion of England. Arriving at Boulogne-sur-Mer, he requisitioned a suitable residence for his headquarters, the Château des Pipots, at nearby Wimille. The elegant country estate became a barracks overnight. Lannes installed his staff and aides in the chateau's gilt-paneled chambers, while other officers and their troops pitched tents in the spacious formal gardens. Arms, cartridge boxes, and supplies were stacked in the outbuildings and against the garden walls. After settling in, Lannes inspected his advance-guard, which included General Louis-Nicolas Oudinot's grenadier division, Honoré Gazan's infantry division, several dragoon regiments, and a light cavalry division. This first meeting between Lannes and Oudinot marked the beginning of a close military and personal association that would last for the next four years. They had a lot in common. Military men first and last, they had little time and no respect for the niceties of polite discourse on the battlefield. They preferred to lead their troops rather than issue orders for other officers to do so. They were careless, getting wounded time and again because of their insouciant disregard for dangerous situations. They cared about their troops' welfare, shared the privations and discomforts of campaigning, and badgered the military bureaucracy often and at length—usually with a healthy dose of profanity—whenever their supplies were late. Their troops followed them willingly, with devotion, respect, and élan.[3]

Lannes's sojourn at Boulogne-sur-Mer was briefly interrupted when Napoleon decided to emulate Charlemagne—again—and have himself crowned king of Italy. The emperor chose a few civil and military dignitaries, including Lannes and his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, to accompany him. Evidently Napoleon never heard about Lannes's comments when he had named Joseph honorary colonel of an infantry regiment. "[Napoleon] better not put [Joseph] under my orders," the marshal had said, "because I'd arrest him the first time he made a mistake." Had he known about this unflattering but accurate assessment of Joseph's military ability, Napoleon probably would have left Lannes by the seaside. The emperor stopped at Marengo, a victory he recalled with fondness and a certain degree of personal embellishment, and ordered a splendid parade and review of French and Italian troops. He gave Lannes the honor of planning and conducting the review. On 26 May they reached Milan, where Napoleon added the iron crown of Lombardy to his collection.[4]

By the end of August, Napoleon realized an invasion of England would not work; the British navy and the English Channel proved too much for the French. Rarely without a contingency plan, Napoleon switched his attention to the other member of the Third Coalition, Austria, who was already assembling its armies. There was no water, or at least not much, between him and this enemy. Besides, the emperor reasoned, he had always defeated the Austrians.

Cabinet ministers Franz Colloredo and Johann Ludwig Cobenzl insisted Austria was ready to take back its Italian possessions. Pressuring emperor Francis II and his brother, the Archduke Charles, to take the offensive, they dwelt on the

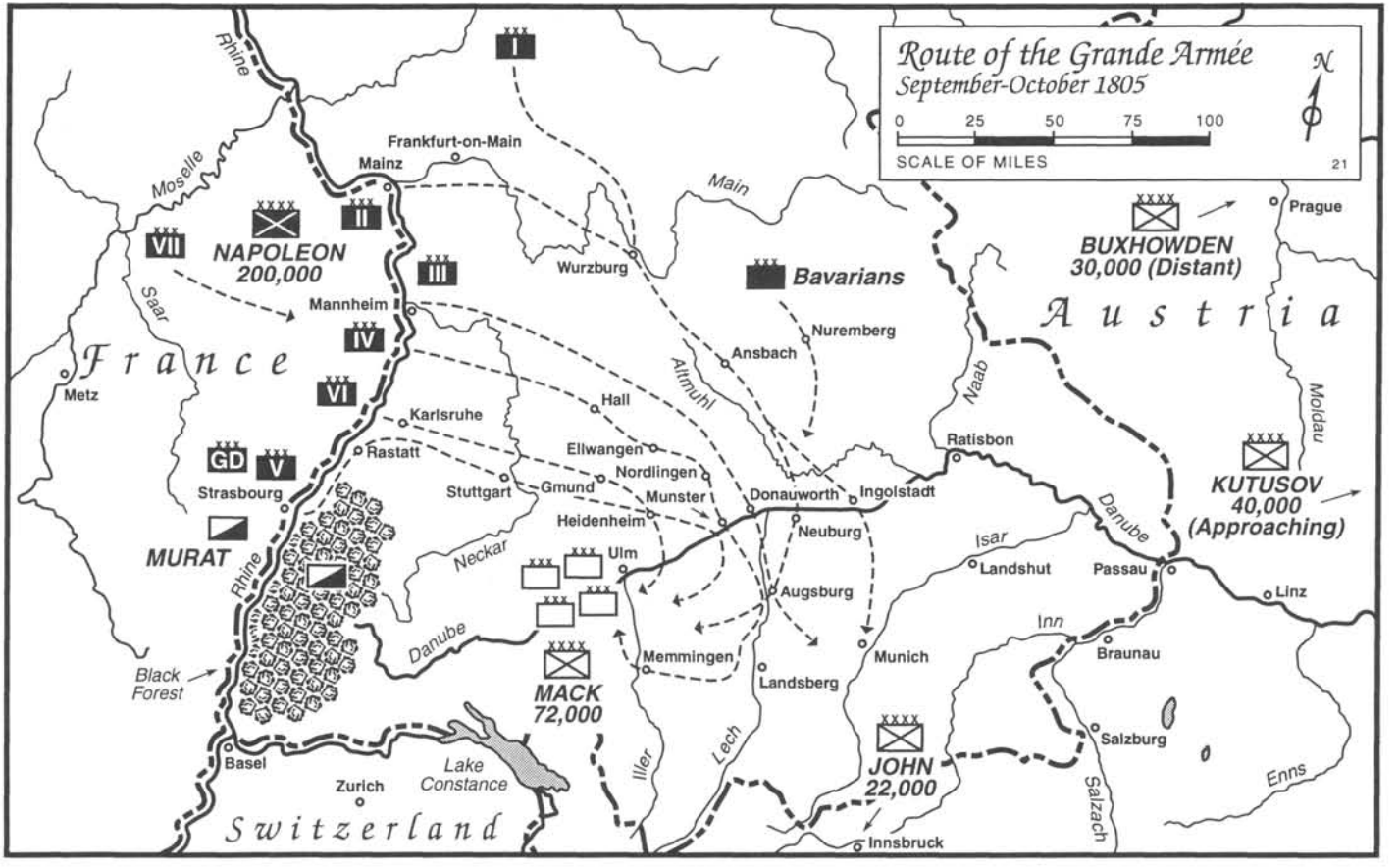
significance of Napoleon's assumption of the Lombard crown and his annexation of Genoa. Although Archduke Charles disagreed, the "war party" convinced the emperor to act. The archduke gave in to the prevailing bellicose fervor and took an army of 95,000 men to northern Italy. General Karl Mack von Lieberich, a less-than-inspired choice, commanded an army of 58,000 in Bavaria, under the titular orders of Archduke Ferdinand. Archduke John's 35,000 troops in the Tyrol lay between the two larger forces. The Austrians meant to remain on the defensive until their Russian allies, commanded by Mikhail Ilarionavich Kutuzov, Friedrich Buxhöwden, and Levin Bennigsen, arrived. At that point they would launch an offensive against the French.[5]

The Austrians thought northern Italy would be the main operational area, perhaps because they considered it crucial to their own interests. Napoleon thought otherwise. Leaving from Strasbourg, he intended to march to Vienna. His army, already well drilled and disciplined, needed nothing more than a new name and a few organizational changes. On 26 August 1805, the Armée des Côtes de l'Océan became the Grande Armée, with seven army corps, a cavalry corps, the Imperial Guard, and an artillery reserve.

The seven corps were models of military self-sufficiency and organizational genius. Even Lannes's small corps with its advance-guard function conformed to Napoleon's standardized directives. Nothing about this corps had changed except its number, from 4th to 6th and finally to the 5th, from which it would not change again. Lannes's état-major included thirty-eight officers, headed by his chief-of-staff, General Dominique Compans. In addition to Oudinot's grenadier division and Gazan's infantry division, the 5th Corps had General Jean-Louis Fauconnet's hussars and General François Treillard's light cavalry regiments. General Louis-François Foucher commanded the artillery, and Colonel François-Joseph Kirgener was in charge of the engineers. Lannes had also been promised General Gabriel Suchet's infantry division. At its present strength, on paper at least, the advance-guard numbered 16,500 troops, smaller than most of the other corps but sufficient for its specific function.[6]

The corps commanders returned to Paris until the army's departure from the Channel camps had gotten underway. Divisional generals would direct the troops along their different routes until all the corps reached the Rhine. Lannes sent orders for the 5th Corps to Oudinot to leave on 26 August for Strasbourg, followed by Gazan and the cavalry. Although the marshal did not know it at the time, Suchet's infantry division would not join him for several frustrating weeks.[7]

In spite of the emperor's organizational design, the 5th Corps did not march toward Strasbourg and the Rhine in any recognizable order. Oudinot's grenadiers were well in advance, with Gazan several days' march behind on different roads. The light cavalry regiments were nowhere near their infantry comrades. Only the clever and indefatigable Berthier managed to coordinate these disparate movements to ensure the various units would actually join together at the appropriate time and place. Even during those first weeks, Lannes was not always confident in Berthier's ability. Whenever the chief-of-staff fiddled with his corps's strength or composition, he would protest, usually to Napoleon. Sometimes his arguments had results, sometimes not.[8]


Route of the Grande Armée
September-October 1805
0 25 50 75 100
SCALE OF MILES
21
N
Rhine
Moselle
Saar
Main
Altmuhl
Naab
Moldau
Danube
Neckar
Isar
Inn
Lech
Iller
Salzach
Enns
Rhine
Frankfurt-on-Main
Mainz
Wurzburg
Mannheim
Metz
Karlsruhe
Rastatt
Strasbourg
Stuttgart
Ansbach
Nuremberg
Hall
Ellwangen
Nordlingen
Gmund
Munster
Heidenheim
Donauworth
Ingolstadt
Ratisbon
Neuburg
Ulm
Augsburg
Landshut
Passau
Linz
Braunau
Munich
Landsberg
Memmingen
Salzburg
Innsbruck
Basel
Zurich
Lake Constance
Black Forest
Prague
Austria
France
Switzerland
I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
GD
NAPOLEON
200,000
MURAT
MACK
72,000
Bavarians
BUXHOWDEN
30,000 (Distant)
KUTUSOV
40,000
(Approaching)
JOHN
22,000

Napoleon left Paris with his corps commanders and arrived in Strasbourg on 23 September. Lannes and the other marshals gathered provisions in the well-stocked city for the next leg of the journey across the Rhine. Ever precise, Berthier told Lannes exactly how much of what to take, reminding him that he would have to pay for additional food and forage if his corps ran short. Unfortunately, the supplies taken at Strasbourg disappeared faster than Lannes expected, and he discovered he could not pay for additional supplies when he ran into immediate problems with the army paymasters. Irritated with such inefficiency, he had to leave Strasbourg without his artillery and enough cartridges for the infantry. Berthier assured him that both were forthcoming after he received a terse note from the marshal, the first of many. In spite of Berthier's promises, it would be days before they arrived.[9]

Napoleon was equally aware of the campaign's difficulties. He dodged them in his usual style by issuing a proclamation to the army at Strasbourg, inspiring his soldiers with promises of glory after a few minor hardships. "Soldiers, we must make forced marches and endure fatigue and privations of every kind," he announced, "but we will overcome all obstacles in our way and rest when we have planted our eagles on the enemy's soil." The troops were suitably inspired, unaware that the actual planting was three long months away.[10]

General Mack had moved into Bavaria early in September and occupied Munich unopposed. Instead of remaining there near supply depots and the advancing Russians, he advanced toward Ulm on the Iller River. The position at Ulm would become a case of one river too far, although he probably did not think the French could cross the Rhine and reach Bavaria before the Russians joined him. Plodding steadily west to join the allies of whom he had a decidedly low opinion, Kutuzov understood more than Mack did. He recognized the trap that Ulm could be, and left the Austrian commander to extricate himself without his assistance.[11]

Because Mack had so conveniently isolated himself, Napoleon took advantage of the situation to advance toward the Danube at Donauwörth, encircling him. He ordered Murat's cavalry and the 5th Corps to screen the Grande Armée's advance until it was too late for Mack. His communication and retreat lines severed, he would have to fight, and Napoleon intended to win, convincingly.

Just after midnight on 25 September, Lannes and Murat reached Kehl. The 5th Corps cavalry crossed the Rhine at three in the morning, followed by Oudinot's grenadiers and the reserve cavalry. Heading toward Rastadt, Fauconnet and Treillard sent their light cavalry ahead to reconnoiter because Lannes had no idea of the enemy's exact location. Berthier told him to bivouac at Rastadt at least a day or two until the rest of his corps caught up with him. When he arrived on the 27th, more than ready to stop, Lannes discovered that Berthier had sent new orders sending him on to Ettlingen, with or without his divisions. Before he had time to leave Rastadt, Berthier changed his destination again. "Leave on the 29th for Ludwigsberg, and get there no later than the first of October . . . Gazan's division and your artillery reserve have reached Strasbourg, and will join you as soon as possible."[12]

Because it had taken him three days to reach Rastadt, Lannes knew he would not see the rest of his troops any time soon, despite Berthier's matter-of-fact assurances. If he were continually sent ahead on forced marches, he expected the entire campaign would be over before his corps reached its promised strength. Already exasperated and short-tempered, he did not need much to set him off. Arriving at Rastadt several hours after Lannes, Murat obliged. He complained that Lannes should have already left, and because he had not, the reserve cavalry had to bivouac in the suburbs. "My troops have covered long distances and they're tired," Murat grumbled to Berthier. "We expected to sleep in Rastadt . . . it's a great inconvenience that Lannes and Oudinot are in the way." Lannes could have argued—and probably did—that he would have been long gone but for Berthier's ever-changing orders. He could have pointed out—and probably did—that while Murat's cavalry rose all the way to Rastadt, his infantry and Oudinot's grenadiers had marched, and were just as exhausted. At this point, he did not care where he and his troops slept, as long as they got some rest.[13]

Prodded by Berthier's orders and Murat's petty displeasure, Lannes left Rastadt for Ludwigsberg before dawn on 1 October. When General Compans reported the cavalry had not seen any Austrian forces or outposts, he concluded his way to Ulm was clear. Joined at last by Gazan's division, he reached Ludwigsberg on the 3rd. He intended to restock because his provisions were running low, but found nothing in Ludwigsberg or the vicinity. He mentioned this lack in a note to Berthier, expecting him to do something about it.[14]

Napoleon's concerns were on a larger scale. He needed to know if the Austrians were at Nördlingen or Heidenheim, and told Lannes to capture enough enemy soldiers to discover the Austrian strength and location. The tireless Berthier joined in with more precise instructions, including how many miles and hours apart each advance-guard component should march. "The emperor will be right behind you, so send [him] news two or three times each day."[15]

Lannes arrived at Schörndorf early on 4 October, set up temporary headquarters, corralled a Württemberg merchant for interrogation, requisitioned supplies, and passed information back to Napoleon. "The merchant's name is Meuter," he wrote. "He says 4,000 more Austrians have arrived at Ulm and requisitioned peasants to work on the fortifications. . . . Memmingen is also occupied by Austrians, with some of their detachments cantoned in neighboring villages. . . . Aalen has at least a squadron of enemy hussars." Less politely and certainly with less information, Lannes wrote to Berthier. "I'm sending you a report from a Württemberg merchant. I don't have the time and, because you insist on getting news right away, interrogate the merchant yourself."[16]

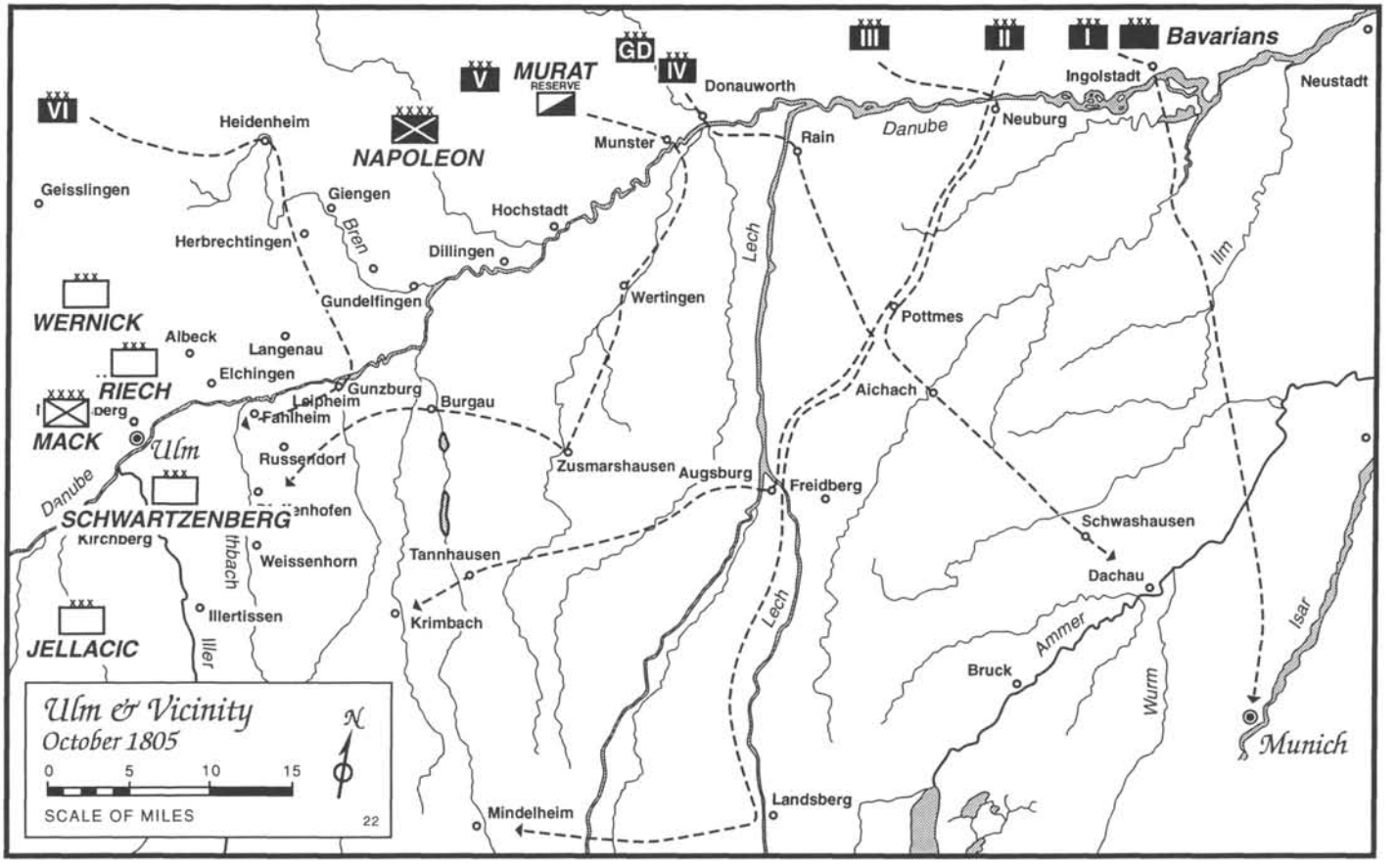
With confirmation that the enemy was Ulm, Napoleon told Lannes to take Oudinot's grenadiers and the 5th Corps light cavalry to Donauwörth, leaving Gazan at Aalen to contain any Austrian detachments inclined to leave Ulm. "I've reached Neresheim with Oudinot," Lannes wrote on 6 October. "Gazan's still at Aalen—he knows what to do." So far the 5th Corps and Murat's reserve cavalry had successfully screened the army from Austrian probes and attacks, and the army reached the Danube by 6 October. Although Napoleon and his corps commanders were pleased with their rapid and undetected progress, the troops did

not necessarily share the same pleasure. One soldier recalled years later that "except for the Russian campaign, I never suffered so much nor saw the army so disorganized." Even the weather refused to cooperate: dry, dusty heat gave way to periods of cold, drenching rain. Already short tempers grew volatile from forced marches and little food. "There aren't any stores in a war of invasion like this one," Berthier reminded Marmont, who complained as Lannes frequently did.[17]

Napoleon refused to accept any delays with the enemy concentrated at Ulm. He ordered Lannes to cross the Danube at Münster and continue to Wertingen, staying in communication with Murat and Marshal Michel Ney's 6th Corps behind him. As he crossed the river at Münster, Lannes heard artillery fire from the direction of Wertingen and galloped toward it at the head of his troops. General Franz Auffenberg had hurried to prevent the French crossing at Donauwörth but, too late for that, he decided to stand at Wertingen with 6,000 troops against Murat's cavalry.[18]

As the campaign's first major engagement, Wertingen was not particularly brilliant. Murat's cavalry and the 5th Corps's grenadiers owed their success to Auffenberg's disregard for reports that Lannes was marching from Münster. Nevertheless, Wertingen served as a cheerful interlude in a long, difficult march, and Napoleon seemed pleased with the results. Lannes sent his report off that evening, full of facts and hyperbole. "The Austrians retreated toward Günzburg. We captured 1,200 to 1,500 prisoners, 5 or 6 guns, and 6 flags, while we lost less than 50 killed and 90 wounded. Murat's cavalry, my own, and the grenadiers rivaled each other with their ardor and courage—They shouted *Vive l'Empereur* during and after the battle." While there is no doubt about courage, it is unlikely that the French spent their time extolling the emperor as they decimated the enemy. Given the reputation of Oudinot's grenadiers, one would expect any shouting to be on a more profane level. Later that night Lannes escorted 1,000 prisoners and two of the captured flags to Donauwörth. He also wrote home, one of the many status reports intended to impress his wife with his bravery and the amazing ease with which he dispatched a largely incompetent enemy. "The Austrians are on the point of full retreat—I expect the Russians will arrive just in time to share in their defeat."[19]

The next morning Lannes made sure that Berthier understood exactly how matters stood with the 5th Corps. "I turned over my light cavalry to Murat as you ordered. This leaves me with just my grenadier division, while the other corps have three or four divisions each. I can't engage in the same kinds of large-scale operations as my fellow marshals with so few troops. However, I'll do whatever is necessary, with zeal and devotion in the face of enemy fire, to assure victory for the emperor." The message was not lost on Napoleon. He laid on the flattery first, reinforcements second. "It's unfortunate you were [at Wertingen] for just two hours; otherwise, not a single Austrian would have escaped. You're always in the right place at the right time, and do very well. I'm sending [General Louis-Vincent] Saint-Hilaire's and Suchet's infantry divisions to bring your corps to 25,000 troops." Mercurial as ever, Lannes forgot his earlier complaints, including the one just made that morning. He did not even seem to mind sharing a victory with Murat.[20]


VI
Heidenheim
NAPOLEON
V
MURAT
RESERVE
GD
IV
Donauworth
III
II
I
Bavarians
Ingolstadt
Neustadt
Munster
Rain
Danube
Neuburg
Geisslingen
Giengen
Bren
Hochstadt
Herbrechtingen
Dillingen
Lech
Ilm
Gundelfingen
Wertingen
WERNICK
Albeck
Langenau
Pottmes
Elchingen
RIECH
Gunzburg
Leipheim
Burgau
Aichach
Fahlheim
MACK
Ulm
Russendorf
Zusmarshausen
Augsburg
Freidberg
Danube
SCHWARTZENBERG
Schwashausen
Kirchberg
Weissenhorn
Tannhausen
Dachau
Illertissen
Krimbach
Lech
JELLACIC
Iller
Ammer
Isar
Bruck
Wurm
Munich
Landsberg
Mindelheim
Ulm & Vicinity
October 1805
N
0 5 10 15
SCALE OF MILES
22

The next few days were spent in reconnaissance as the French columns closed in on Ulm. Still in tandem with Murat, Lannes reached Albeck the evening of 12 October and went looking for the enemy. He found no more than 5,000 reserves around Ulm and a few more on the Iller's right bank, and thought they might withdraw that evening. Based on his observation, Lannes suggested that Murat reinforce Dupont on the right bank, then advise Napoleon of the situation. Now in overall command, Murat disagreed and chose to do nothing. He did tell the emperor that he did not believe the intelligence reports or Lannes's estimates of enemy strength. Sidelined by Murat's intransigence, Lannes grumbled about consequences of inaction and lack of initiative. Philippe de Ségur, one of the imperial aides, agreed with him, later writing that Lannes's assessment of the situation was an example of "the true military instinct so characteristic" of him.[21]

Not only did Murat ignore Lannes's advice but he also attempted to control Ney, ordering him to abandon the bridge and town of Elchingen, just north of Ulm. If possible, Ney was more headstrong and impetuous than Lannes, and refused to do so. Faced with Mack's attempt to break out of Ulm early on 14 October, Ney engaged 9,000 Austrians along the bridgehead and the town of Elchingen. Napoleon heard the firing at the same time that Lannes arrived at imperial headquarters at Gunzburg. Lannes asked why the emperor was still at headquarters while Ney was at Elchingen, taking on the Austrian army by himself. Overlooking another example of Gascon exaggeration, Napoleon replied that Ney was supposed to wait for reinforcements before attacking anyone. "He's always the same," the emperor remarked. "He attacks the enemy as soon as he sees them." Uninterested in Ney's bellicose nature, nothing less than a mirror image of his own, Lannes told Napoleon he was sending his grenadiers in at once. Now anxious to see what was going on, Napoleon rode out to observe the action at Elchingen. Lannes thought the emperor's position was too dangerous. With no concern for protocol, he grabbed the reins of Napoleon's horse and pulled him out of range of the enemy's guns. As they waited, Ney sent a message stating he could handle the situation quite well, did not need Lannes's grenadiers, and refused to share glory with anyone. Ney got his way, and the 5th Corps did not intrude on his victory.[22]

Lannes sent Gazan's division to Pfühl, where he chased Austrian cavalry fleeing from Elchingen, then ran into 1,200 enemy infantry attempting to break out of Ulm. With help from the 10th Hussars he pushed them back to the bridge. Harassed all the way by various determined Austrian detachments, Lannes reached Söflingen late on the 15th with four of Suchet's regiments. Because the 5th Corps artillery had such a difficult march, he thought they had gone as far as they could that day, and called a halt. Murat's cavalry had already occupied Grimmelfingen, and he did not want to share a bivouac with them and risk another altercation over who would sleep where. Lannes remained at Söflingen for the next two days and sent for Oudinot and Gazan. He was summoned back to Elchingen on the 18th, where Napoleon ordered him to take Oudinot and General Etienne-Marie Nansouty to Heidenheim and round up any Austrians attempting to escape from Ulm and join Archduke Ferdinand. Suchet and Gazan would remain at Söflingen for the time being. As far as Lannes could tell, the first phase of the

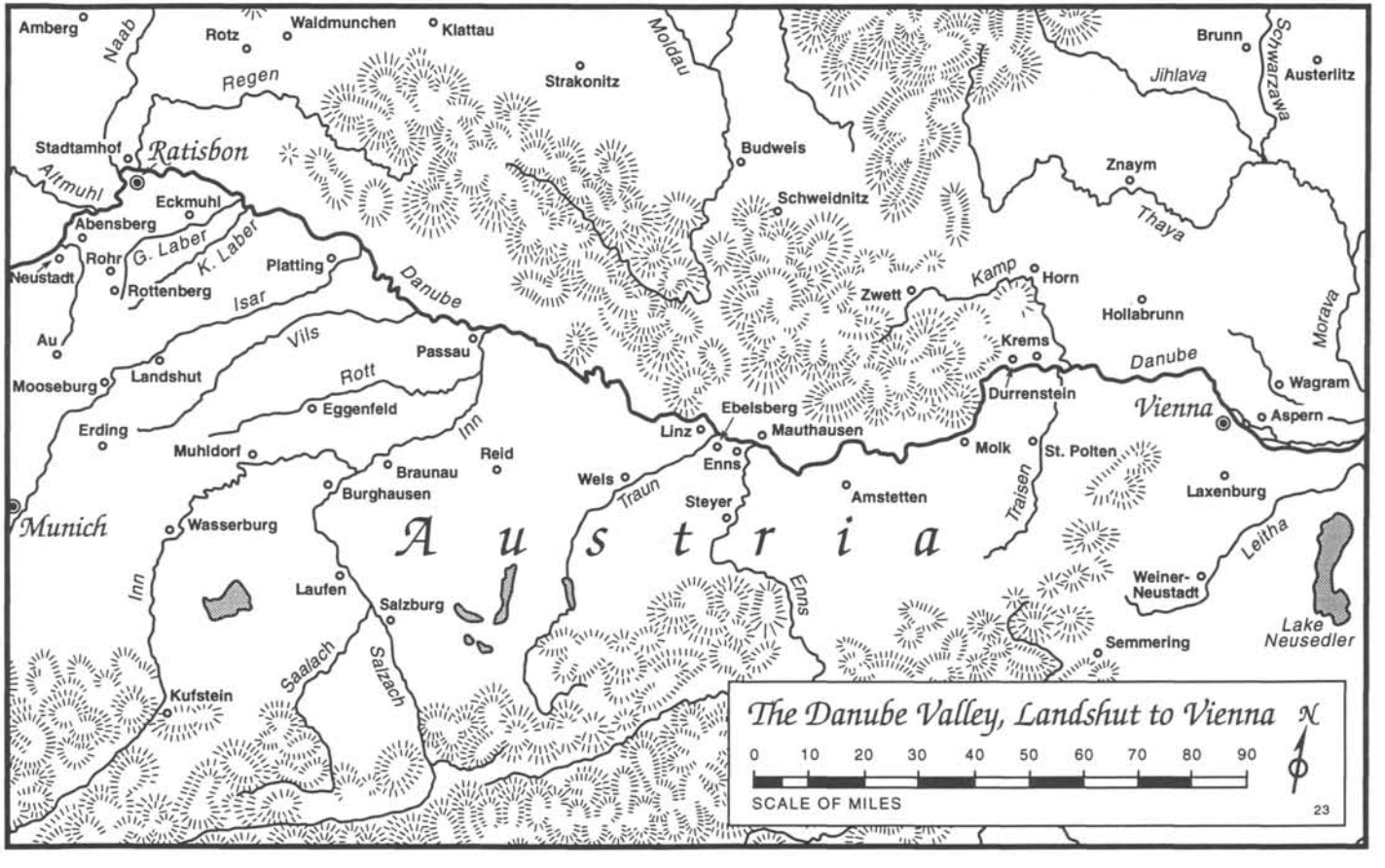
campaign had ended. "Murat and I opened the ball together," he wrote to Louise, "and we've had our last dance with the Austrians."[23]

Two days later Mack capitulated with almost his whole army of 35,000 men. Before he reached Heidenheim, Lannes heard that Murat had captured Archduke Ferdinand's corps, allowing only a few light cavalry to escape. "Because Murat doesn't need me, I'm going to Ingolstadt with Oudinot, Nansouty, and Beaumont," Lannes wrote Napoleon from Nördlingen. He lost no time, reaching Ingolstadt on 23 October and found Berthier's orders directing him to Landshut without delay. Lannes made it on the 26th with Suchet and Gazan. The 5th Corps spent a day restocking supplies and drinking generous amounts of German beer.[24]

Napoleon directed the rest of the Grande Armée to Landshut and the Isar River. Somewhere on the other side was Kutuzov and his 32,000 troops, recently reinforced by 18,000 men led by Austrian Generals Michael Kienmayer and Johann Nostitz. Resisting the urge to say "I told you so" with regard to the debacle at Ulm, Kutuzov began to withdraw toward Vienna as soon as reports of the French crossing at the Isar reached him. The 5th Corps advanced toward Braunau and the retreating enemy. Berthier insisted on frequent status reports on the divisions to expedite further orders. Lannes complied, of course, but with minimum details; he knew Berthier would find him no matter where he was. Meanwhile the weather had deteriorated, pelting the troops with freezing rain and snow, turning roads into bogs. Oudinot's grenadiers reached Braunau on 29 October and found the bridge burned, Austrian infantry defending the approaches, and the Russians out of range. Because the enemy burned the bridges as they retreated, Lannes's corps slowed its advance for the next several days. Colonel Kirgener and the bridging train spent all night battling snow and high winds to repair the Braunau bridge so they could cross the Inn. Oudinot sent his grenadiers across in commandeered rowboats to prevent attacks from the enemy's rear-guard. He was lucky, because the Russians seemed more interested in getting away than stopping the French advance.[25]

Across the Inn by early morning on the 30th, Lannes sent Oudinot ahead to Riedham and left three infantry companies from Suchet's division to garrison Braunau. Berthier caught up with Lannes at Braunau. "There's no point staying here," he said. "The enemy's retreating." Though the 5th Corps left Braunau as ordered, Lannes stayed behind. Worn down by weeks of long, arduous marches in miserable weather, with only the scanty rations he shared with his troops, Lannes had been ill since Landshut. He had gotten worse at Braunau, issuing orders in a hoarse croak, shaking with chills and fever. Normally oblivious to such weaknesses, this time he was about to collapse. Dr. Larrey refused to listen to any excuses, dismissed protestations about the emperor's orders, and ignored exorbitant claims of indispensability. By the end of Larrey's visit, Lannes could no longer argue—he had lost his voice. He scribbled a note to Oudinot, turning over the 5th Corps to him and promising to join him as soon as he could escape from Larrey's medical restrictions.[26]

After another hazardous crossing at Schärding—once again Kirgener had to replace destroyed bridges—and a forced march of over forty miles, Oudinot reached Efferding on 1 November. Lannes joined him there late that evening, still


Amberg
Naab
Rotz
Waldmunchen
Klattau
Moldau
Strakonitz
Brunn
Schwarzawa
Austerlitz
Jihlava
Regen
Stadtamhof
Ratisbon
Budweis
Znaym
Altmuhl
Eckmuhl
Schweidnitz
Thaya
Abensberg
Rohr
G. Laber
K. Laber
Platting
Neustadt
Rottenberg
Isar
Danube
Zwett
Kamp
Horn
Hollabrunn
Au
Vils
Passau
Krems
Morava
Danube
Mooseburg
Landshut
Rott
Durrenstein
Wagram
Eggenfeld
Ebelsberg
Vienna
Erding
Inn
Linz
Mauthausen
Aspern
Muhldorf
Reid
Molk
St. Polten
Braunau
Enns
Wels
Traun
Laxenburg
Burghausen
Steyer
Amstetten
Traisen
Munich
Wasserburg
A u s t r i a
Leitha
Inn
Laufen
Salzburg
Enns
Weiner-
Neustadt
Lake
Neusedler
Semmering
Saalach
Salzach
Kufstein
The Danube Valley, Landshut to Vienna
N
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90
SCALE OF MILES
23

sick, hardly able to talk, but unwilling to miss anything. He left Oudinot in command of the advance-guard, realizing he was not strong enough for that, and rode at a more leisurely pace with Suchet and the supply wagons at the rear.[27]

During the night of 3 November, the 5th Corps reached Enns to find another burned bridge over another river, resulting in another delay as Kirgener's engineers worked overtime with their dwindling supplies. Bivouacked between Enns, Ebelsberg, and Linz, the officers and men were short-tempered, exhausted, very hungry, and inclined toward violations of the rigid corps discipline. Lannes might be sick but he was not blind. He always knew how his troops fared, what they thought, and what they did. Although he disliked privations and did everything possible to avoid them, he would not tolerate insubordination and unauthorized requisitioning. Faced with both as the winter set in, he had issued a stern order the previous day. "Any soldier or corps employee caught pillaging, fighting, or threatening or striking an officer, will be shot immediately. My divisional generals have authority to carry out the sentence." To show the marshal meant exactly what he said, Oudinot ordered an insubordinate grenadier shot by a firing squad.[28]

The wily Kutuzov had escaped a pitched battle with the advancing French, his strategic withdrawal considerably aided by the many rivers and destroyed bridges. The further he withdrew the closer he came to his supply base and reinforcements. He headed for Moravia, leaving Prince Piotr Ivanovich Bagration and General Mikhail Miloradovich behind as a rear-guard. Disregarding Austrian pleas to defend their capital, Kutuzov placed more importance on joining Buxhöwden's main force. The farther east the French advanced the more they extended their communication lines. Requisitioning and foraging also became increasingly difficult with the approach of winter. These were serious concerns for the army, but Napoleon worried about Prussia's intentions. Frederick William III's neutrality had been secured by the promise of Hanover, but the emperor knew if he did not defeat Kutuzov, the 150,000 Prussian troops on his northern flank would more than likely join the Russians. He also considered the eventual arrival of Archduke Charles's army from northern Italy. To avoid either possibility, Napoleon knew he had to force Kutuzov to fight, and soon.[29]

He designated Murat and Lannes as the advance-guard, again putting Murat in command. Lannes did not like that, having little respect for Murat's strategic abilities and even less tolerance for what he considered an overinflated ego. Using his lingering illness as a convenient excuse, he passed his orders on to Oudinot, who crossed the Enns on 5 November, jogging to keep up with Murat's cavalry. Once across the river, the French advance-guard ran into the Russian rear-guard. The fighting continued for more than twelve hours until the enemy retired to Amstetten. Though the Russians claimed victory, the French advance-guard had managed to repel a much larger force. Murat was pleased with Oudinot, and the grenadier general was pleased with himself for capturing almost 2,000 prisoners and losing less than 200 of his own men. Lannes joined Oudinot near Neumarkt late that night, congratulated his clever subordinate, then said he would resume his command the next morning. He also read Berthier's newest order detaching Gazan's division for temporary service with Marshal Adolphe-Édouard Mortier's

new provisional corps. That did not make him happy either, but he was too tired to complain.[30]

Lannes found conditions just as deplorable as they had been at the campaign's beginning. The rains had stopped, but the temperature dropped below freezing, supplies dwindled, and the retreating Russians were more annoying than the Austrians. Halting near the ancient abbey of Melk on 7 November, Lannes sent a report to Napoleon, more chatty than usual, though no less opinionated. "I haven't written much because Murat's been doing all the writing. The enemy bivouacked here last night; their cavalry left about four this afternoon, ours right behind them. It's too bad the Russians can pick at us so easily—if it wasn't for that constant aggravation we'd be all over them. . . . The Russian generals say they'll fight at Saint-Pölten, but I don't think so. If they planned to fight they wouldn't have abandoned such good positions, or let us get this close without firing a shot. . . . We're out of everything and there's no point trying to forage—the Russians clean the place out before we arrive, leaving us absolutely nothing."[31]

Sixty miles behind at Linz, Napoleon conducted delicate diplomatic negotiations with Elector Maximilian of Bavaria and left the military initiative to Murat. When he and Lannes occupied the abbey on 8 November, Murat did nothing for the next two days, explaining that he had no orders from Napoleon. He relaxed at the splendid abbey, enjoying the large supplies of wine ignored by the retreating Russians and trying to convince Lannes that Kutuzov was on his way to Vienna. Lannes knew better but, because he could do nothing without Murat's orders, he made the best of his enforced idleness. He accepted the monks' hospitality, changed his uniform from the skin out, slept in a real bed, ate more food than he had seen in weeks, drank enough wine to make Murat's posturing bearable, and shook of the last of his persistent fever.[32]

At least Lannes had been correct in his report to Napoleon; the Russians did not make a stand at Saint-Pölten. Instead, Kutuzov left there on 9 November and, taking advantage of Murat's idleness, crossed the Danube at Krems and blew the bridge behind him. The news reached Murat that afternoon. Enchanted by the glorious prospect of capturing the undefended Austrian capital, he prepared to march and ordered Lannes to accompany him.

Mortier also knew that Kutuzov was more important than Vienna. Unfortunately, he thought he could do something about it and raced off after the Russians with Gazan's division-on-loan. He reached Dürnstein and discovered he was isolated on the Danube's north bank by Murat's decision to march to Vienna. Kutuzov could not resist such an easy mark and attacked. During the long afternoon's mêlée, Gazan nearly lost his entire division. Abandoning Linz for the front, Napoleon arrived too late to help Mortier, and Murat had moved too far away for recall. He was not too far away, however, to escape the emperor's reprimands. Napoleon's letter berating him for ill-considered impetuosity and complete lack of foresight reached him on the road to Vienna. Lannes enjoyed Murat's comeuppance entirely too much. He was also not above reminding his superior that he should have paid more attention to reconnaissance reports and less to his own potential glory.[33]

Nevertheless, capturing the Austrian capital became important now—it was the best place to cross the Danube and move on to Hollabrünn before Kutuzov could join Buxhöwden. The advance-guard troops reached the Viennese suburbs on 11 November and set up camp. Murat and Lannes rode into the capital with their aides, Oudinot and a grenadier detachment, and a few cavalry squadrons for show. They met with emissaries who did not want their city destroyed, although no one was prepared to contest the French occupation. While Murat chatted with the nervous delegation, Lannes looked for evidence of potential problems. He lost no time telling Napoleon what he had seen. "[As of the 13th, Vienna is an open city], but Austrians guard the bridges. Intelligence from one of their artillery generals places their strength at 97 guns and a lot of ammunition." If the French planned to cross the Danube here, they would evidently have to fight their way over the bridges.[34]

The largest Danube bridge was really a series of arched wooden structures two-and-a-half miles long. The first two sections of the bridge were not mined, but the third, leading to the village of Spitz, had been rigged with powder and other combustibles, ready to be blown if the French advanced. The elderly Prince Karl Auersperg had ordered a defensive bridgehead, called the Gattertor, built in front of the first two spans and manned by the Szekler Hussars. They had orders to stop the French from crossing, even under a flag of truce. If they tried, the hussars would fire on them, giving the signal to blow the third section.[35]

Acting with accord for once, Lannes and Murat pooled their talents and concocted a plot to capture the bridges. They sent General Bertrand cantering across the first span where he met a suspicious Colonel Gabriel Geringer von Edenberg, in charge of the demolition team. Though his orders closed the bridges to flags of truce, von Edenberg wilted under Bertrand's demand to inform Auersperg of an armistice recently concluded. The Austrian told the gunners to stand by, and rode off with Bertrand to Stammersdorf and the prince's headquarters.

The first phase had gone off without a hitch, and Lannes embarked on the next part of the audacious plan. Passing the Gattertor bridgehead with most of his aides, Murat's chief-of-staff, General Auguste-Daniel Belliard, and one of Oudinot's grenadier brigades creeping behind them, Lannes strolled out onto the bridge. Thick growth on the marshy island close to the mined span hid their progress from the enemy, at least for a while. They knew the Austrians would eventually see them and their unauthorized presence would need some fast-talking justification.[36]

Captain Johann Bulgarich of the Szekler Hussars halted on the Spitz bridge next to the Austrian artillery; he was not as gullible as his commanding officer, von Edenberg. He ordered his gunners to prepare to fire. Lannes saw him give the order and yelled at him to turn the guns around because of the armistice. The gunners complied, but Bulgarich was suspicious. His indecision lasted just long enough for Lannes and Belliard to walk right up on the enemy guns. They launched into a rapid-fire conversation with anyone who would listen, not to pass the time but to distract the gunners from Oudinot's advancing grenadiers. The language difficulty helped. The Austrians' command of French was elementary at

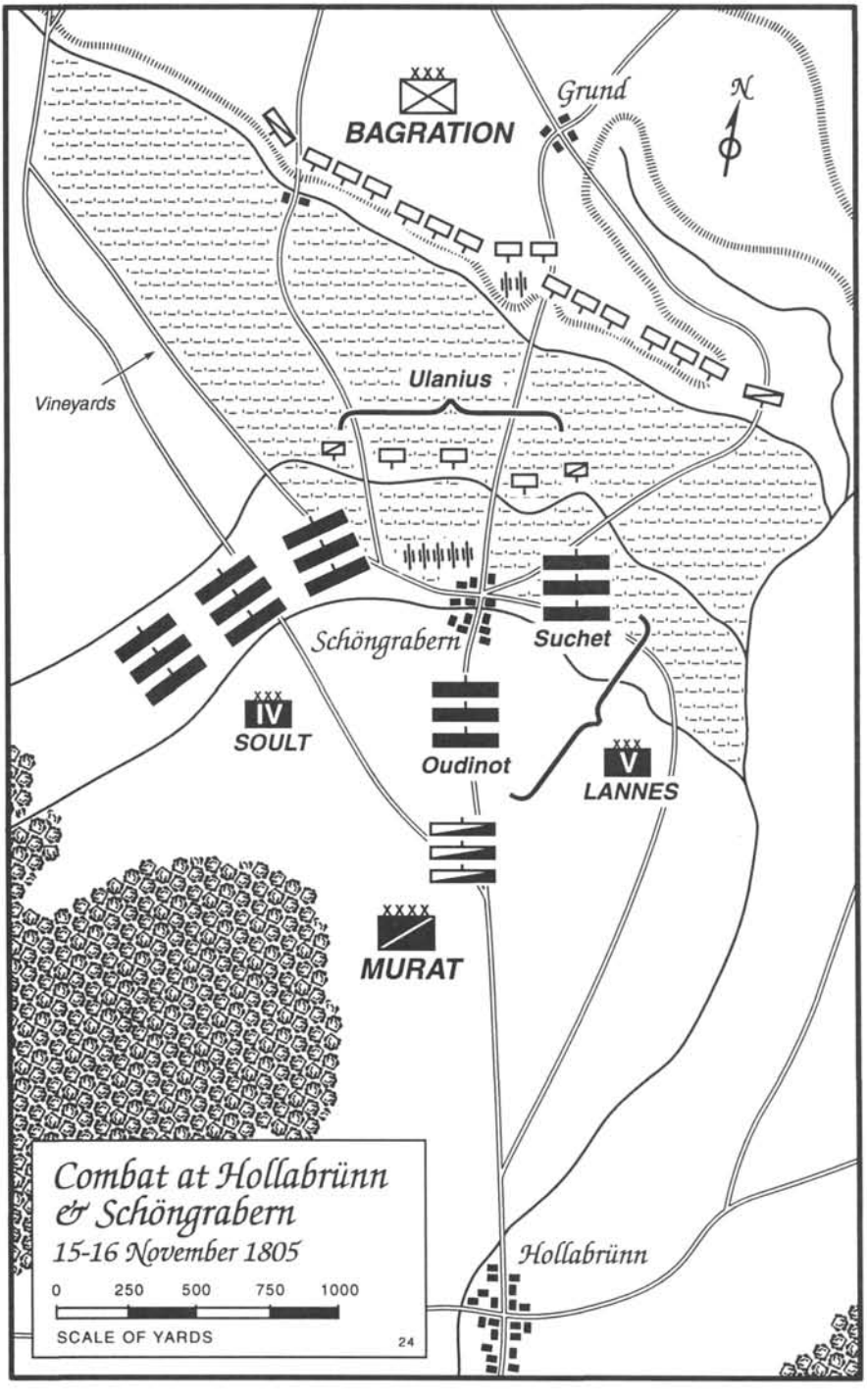
best, and Lannes overwhelmed them with an onslaught of Gascon badinage. He succeeded in diverting their attention, at least momentarily.[37]

Bulgarich finally noticed Oudinot's advance, lost his patience, lit a match, and ordered the gunners to fire. Lannes grabbed his arm, blew out the match, and shouted the order down. Confused, the artillerymen did not light the fuses. With a perfectly straight face, Lannes asked Bulgarich how, when an armistice had been announced, he dared allow such a flagrant breach of famous Austrian military discipline. Bulgarich was spared a reply by the timely arrival of Bertrand and Auersperg. Taking advantage of his new audience, Lannes demanded that Auersperg have Bulgarich shot for his audacity, ordered him to surrender the bridge, then meet with Murat who was patiently waiting to discuss terms. If he failed to agree, the old prince was told he alone would be responsible for 10,000 casualties.[38]

Auersperg gave up. When he ordered the gunners to let the French pass unmolested, Oudinot moved up, dismantled the guns, cut the fuses of the mines, and held the bridge. The affair ended before two in the afternoon, without a single casualty on either side. Lannes never dwelt on his daring cleverness, because he considered it an integral—and unremarkable—part of his personality. Whenever he talked about the Tabor Bridge, he always emphasized the Austrians' complete gullibility, and said he did not understand how an enemy could have been so dumb.[39]

With Vienna and the Danube crossing secure, Napoleon resumed his pursuit of Kutuzov. Still leading the advance-guard, Lannes and Oudinot reached Hollabrünn on 15 November. Gazan's decimated division had not yet been recalled from Mortier's corps, the light cavalry division rode with Murat, and one of Suchet's battalions remained in the rear of the army. Kutuzov had marched through Hollabrünn and the smaller village of Schöngrabern just to the north, hoping to find Buxhöwden. To cover the march and gain time for his supply trains, he ordered Bagration's rear-guard to defend Schöngrabern. After an all-night forced march through the bitter cold, Bagration reached the village with 4,000 exhausted troops. He found Lannes and Murat waiting for him.[40]

Bagration's rear-guard was not the only weapon in Kutuzov's arsenal. He decided to turn the armistice ruse against its original perpetrators. While Bagration's men dug in at Schöngrabern, Kutuzov sent General Ferdinand Wintzingerode under a flag of truce to meet with the French advance-guard. The Austrian told Murat that because negotiations were underway in Vienna, they should both hold their present positions. If the negotiations failed, he added, then whoever broke the truce would give a six-hour warning before resuming hostilities. Murat agreed, mostly because he mistook Bagration's rear-guard for the leading elements of Kutuzov's main force and knew he and Lannes needed reinforcements before they could engage the Russians. He sent an aide-de-camp to notify Napoleon of the cease-fire and invited Wintzingerode, Bagration, and other Russian officers to his headquarters for wine and polite conversation. Lannes never believed Wintzingerode for a minute. Instead, he had a pretty good idea where Kutuzov was, thought Bagration was on his own, and knew Napoleon meant to fight the Russians, not negotiate with them. Already annoyed that his


BAGRATION
Grund
N
Ulanius
Vineyards
Schöngrabern
Suchet
IV
SOULT
Oudinot
V
LANNES
MURAT
Hollabrünn
Combat at Hollabrünn
& Schöngrabern
15-16 November 1805
0 250 500 750 1000
SCALE OF YARDS
24

corps was at half strength and Murat was still telling him what to do, he stood on the edge of the gathering, holding a glass of wine and glaring at friends and enemies alike. He spoke only to Bagration, whom he recognized as a professional soldier, not a buffoon like some in the present company. "If I was on my own and didn't have to put up with Murat's orders," he told the Russian general, "we'd be fighting, not standing around drinking and talking about the goddamned weather." Bagration probably agreed with him.[41]

While Kutuzov marched farther away, Bagration returned to Schöngrabern. Napoleon sent an aide to Murat with another blistering reprimand. "It is impossible for me to find words to express my displeasure with you," he wrote. "Break that truce immediately and attack the enemy. . . . The Austrians allowed themselves to be fooled over the Vienna bridge, but *you* have been fooled by one of [Alexander I's] aides-de-camp!" A chastened Murat gave orders for an offensive while Lannes, enjoying Murat's humiliation, rode off to tell Bagration they would be fighting after all.[42]

Bagration's troops had built some hasty earthworks north of Schöngrabern and deployed behind them when the French attacked the afternoon of 16 November. Russian artillery covered the road from Hollabrünn, raking the advancing grenadiers and infantry as the cavalry attacked them on both flanks. The artillery pounded the French and Schöngrabern—most of the village went up in flames. Murat repulsed the Russian cavalry, but Bagration inflicted heavy casualties among the grenadiers and infantry. Though the French suffered, they overwhelmed the Russians by their superior numbers. The fighting continued until after midnight when the Russians finally withdrew, leaving 2,400 casualties behind. Lannes escaped injury during the battle, not because he avoided the conflict—he was in the middle of it—but because he was lucky. Oudinot was not so fortunate; he was sent to hospital in Vienna along with many other senior officers.[43]

Satisfied with the mauling of Bagration's rear-guard but determined to catch Kutuzov, Napoleon urged the advance-guard forward. Lannes reached Brünn by 21 November and waited there for the next week until his scattered forces could catch up. With little to do but try to stay warm in freezing Moravia, he reviewed Oudinot's grenadier division, minus its wounded commander, then Suchet's infantry when they staggered into Brünn on the 27th.[44]

Napoleon had advanced as far as he dared. The Grande Armée, covering more than 600 miles since the end of September, had dangerously extended its communications lines and depleted its supplies. He knew that Kutuzov had linked with Buxhöwden and the Austrians, some 90,000 strong, their lines secure, supplies plentiful. Arriving in Brünn with the rest of his army, Napoleon considered his options. The best strategy appeared to be convincing the enemy that the Grande Armée was weak and dispersed, one step away from retreat. He decided to discuss the situation with his corps commanders. During the evening of 28 November he placed the 5th Corps on alert status and asked Lannes to meet with him and the other marshals at Posorsitz.[45]

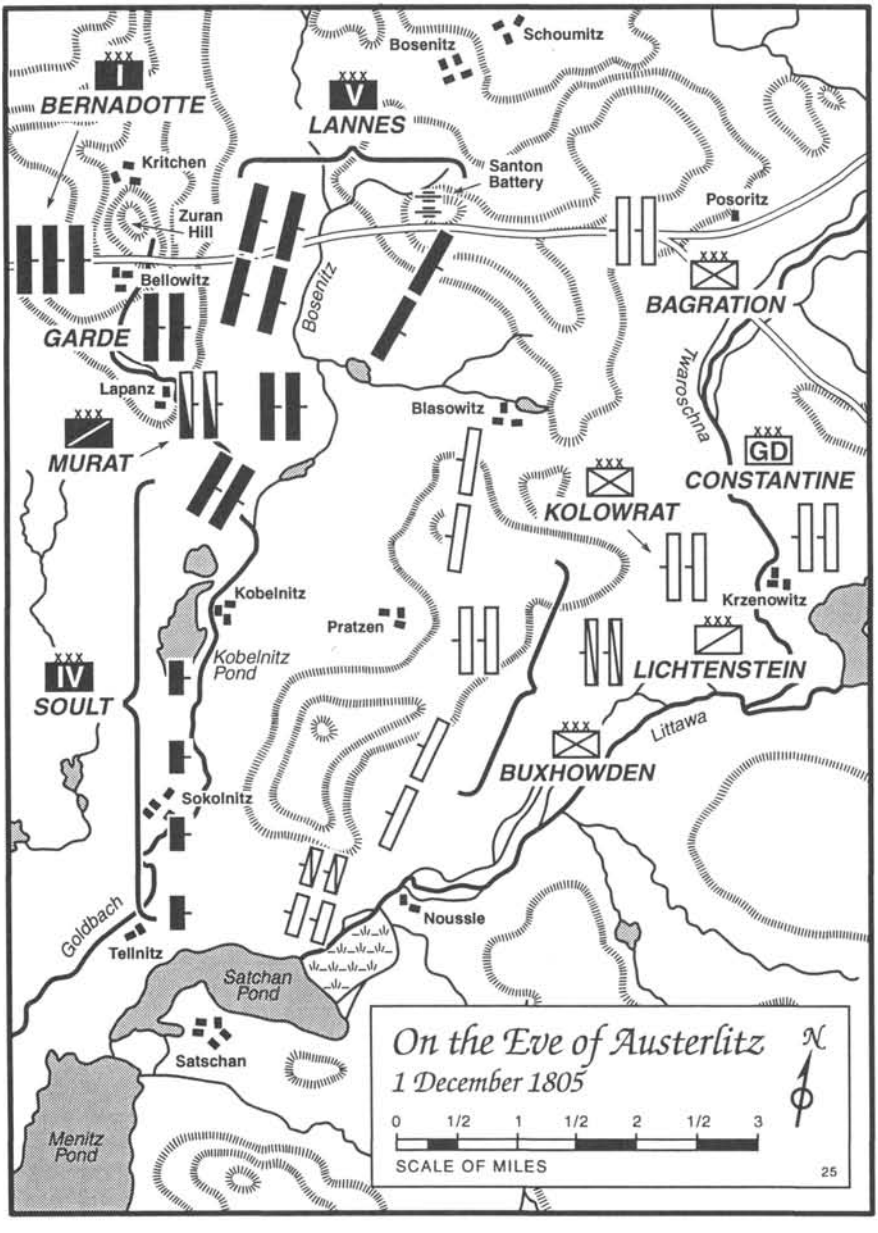
Murat and Marshal Nicolas Soult were already debating the merits—or lack thereof—of their continued presence in Moravia. Soult was particularly worried,

having just run into the enemy at Wischau, and recommended a strategic withdrawal. When Lannes arrived, the two marshals tried to convince him that none of them could hold the positions Napoleon expected, nor could they withstand the enemy's numerical superiority. Because he let them talk on without interrupting, Soult evidently thought Lannes agreed, and suggested he present these concerns in writing to the emperor. Soult and Murat knew he was not scared of Napoleon, used to telling him exactly what he thought, and surviving.

Napoleon arrived shortly after the unofficial conference and found them all in a bad mood, tired of arguing, tired of everything. When he asked why they were so surly, Murat handed him the note Lannes had written, the ink scarcely dry. "I can't imagine you advising retreat," Napoleon commented after reading the note. "You've never done that before. Soult, what do you think?" Soult had an immediate change of heart. Seconded by the waffling Murat, he blamed his hesitancy on Lannes, swearing *he* would never suggest retreat. The volatile Gascon marshal exploded. In an outpouring of profanity, he accused Soult of lying, cowardice, and everything else he could think of on such short notice, then challenged him to a duel on the spot. Napoleon sided with Lannes. "He's right in this case," the emperor remarked, "but no duels—I'll need you both later." He left the angry trio to issue orders for withdrawal to deceive the enemy forces. Vindicated by Napoleon, Lannes added Soult to a growing list of colleagues whom he despised.[46]

Putting his enmity aside for the moment, Lannes sifted through a stack of orders and began deploying his corps according to the emperor's directives. Several days earlier Napoleon had pointed out the tactical advantage of a hill just to the north of the Brünn-Olmütz road. Some of Lannes's troops called it the Santon Hill after a similar hill they had seen near El-Arish during the Egyptian campaign. They demolished the small chapel on the top and replaced it with an 18-gun battery, more suitable for their purposes than prayers. Napoleon personally ordered the 17th *Légère* from Suchet's division and commanded by General Michel-Marie Claparède to hold the hill at all costs. Lannes also found among the many orders the instructions for him to hold the Brünn-Olmütz road and keep Bagration from moving south to reinforce the Austro-Russian center. He knew this was a defensive assignment and, after months of leading the advance-guard on the offensive, he did not like it at all. He also resented the fact that his grenadiers, temporarily commanded by General Géraud-Christophe Duroc, were held in reserve on Napoleon's order, leaving him with just Suchet's and General Marie-François Caffarelli's infantry divisions. As usual, Murat would be appropriating his light cavalry division. With barely concealed annoyance, he moved his staff to Bellowitz on 30 November, leaving his cavalry to cover the highway.[47]

In spite of its questionable position, the Grande Armée's morale was high during the night of 1 December. Although campfires had not been lit to prevent the enemy from pinpointing their dispositions, a spontaneous demonstration broke out when Napoleon rode through the lines in the dark. Soldiers lit torches and shouted "Vive l'Empereur!" loud enough for the enemy to hear. The enemy ignored this display of affection and continued their ill-conceived preparations for


Bosenitz
Schoumitz
BERNADOTTE
LANNES
Kritchen
Santon Battery
Posoritz
Zuran Hill
Bellowitz
Bosenitz
BAGRATION
GARDE
Lapanz
Blasowitz
Tmaroschna
MURAT
GD
CONSTANTINE
KOLOWRAT
Kobelnitz
Krzenowitz
Pratzen
Kobelnitz Pond
LICHTENSTEIN
IV
SOULT
Littawa
BUXHOWDEN
Sokolnitz
Goldbach
Noussle
Tellnitz
Satchan Pond
Satschan
Menitz Pond
On the Eve of Austerlitz
1 December 1805
N
0 1/2 1 1/2 2 1/2 3
SCALE OF MILES
25

battle.[48]

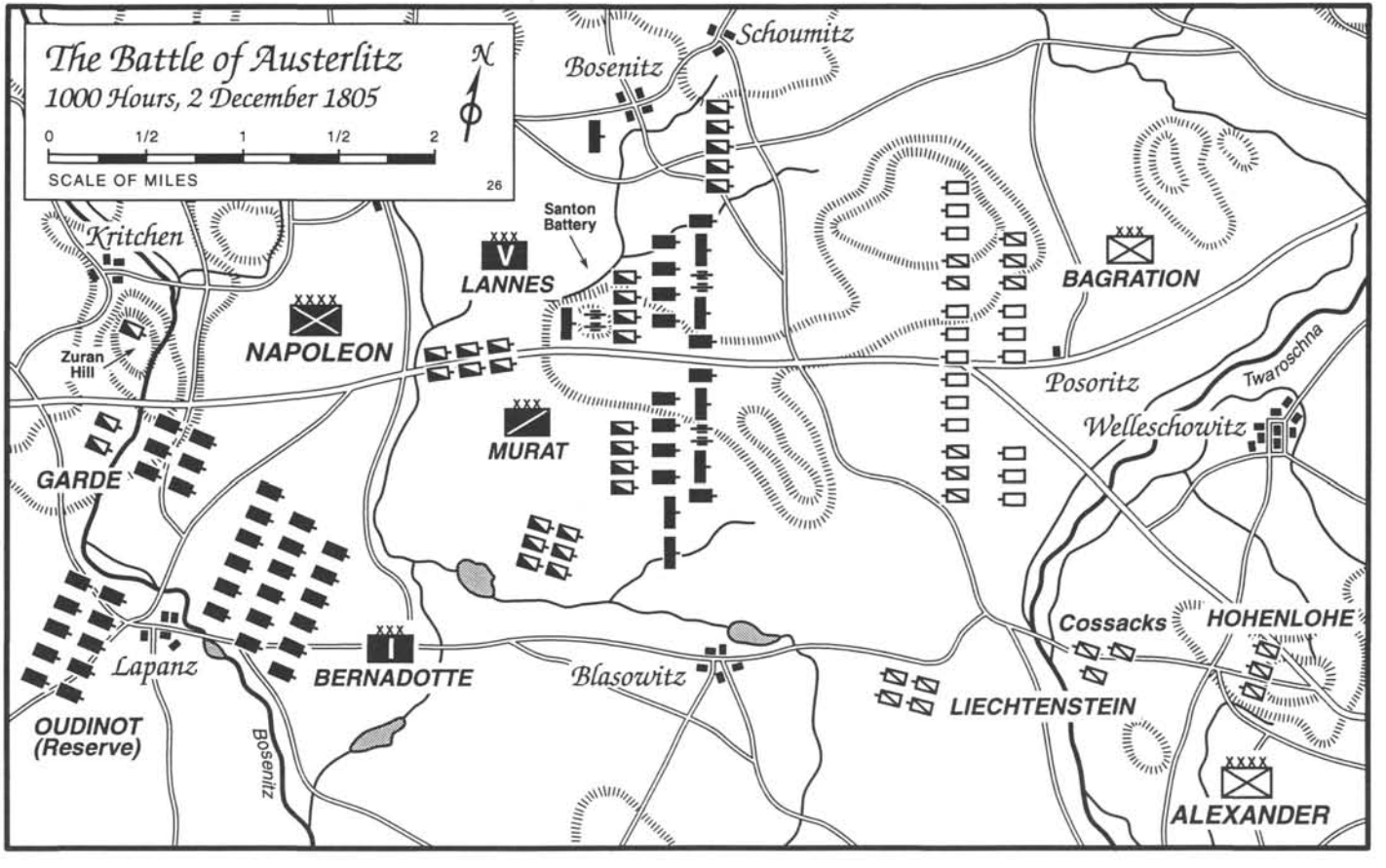
The sun of Austerlitz dawned on 2 December through a providential fog allowing Soult to move undetected below the Pratzen Heights and Davout to employ minimal force to contain the bulk of the enemy forces. When the fog lifted and the winter sun broke through, Napoleon's strategy began to unfold. The enemy center collapsed under Soult's surprise attack while Davout assaulted their left.

Bagration had his own plans for success on the northern flank. He deployed three infantry regiments in two lines across the Brünn-Olmütz road and dispatched the Elisabetgrad Hussars and the Kharkov and Tchernigov Dragoons to his left. General Fyedor Petrovich Uvarov, one of Bagration's aides, commanded the Pavlograd and Mariupol Hussars on the right, with the Empress's Cuirassiers and the St. Petersburg and Tver Dragoons in reserve. Prince Johann Lichtenstein led 4,600 cavalry further to the left. All together Bagration had some 17,600 men facing Lannes on the northern edge of the battlefield. Defensive or not, it would be a neat trick to contain this force and keep it away from the center.[49]

Lannes sent Treillard's and General Édouard-Jean Milhaud's light cavalry divisions north of Brünn-Olmütz road, Suchet's infantry division echeloned between them and the road, and General Jean-Joseph d'Hautpoul's cuirassiers behind Suchet. To the south Nansouty supported Caffarelli's infantry, and Murat's cavalry deployed behind the 5th Corps. The Imperial Guard and Oudinot's grenadier division remained in reserve.[50]

No one on the entire northern flank had fired a shot before 9:30 that morning, and then everything happened at once. When Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte's 1st Corps moved toward Blasowitz in support of Soult's attack on the Pratzen Heights, the Russian Imperial Guard took the village away from them. Bagration immediately launched his cavalry toward Bosenitz. Lichtenstein saw Bagration's cavalry advance, galloped north in support, dragging his horse artillery, and directed a cuirassier regiment toward the Staré Vinohrady heights. At the same time, the main body of Bagration's cavalry charged Caffarelli's infantry. Nansouty came pounding from behind the infantry and repulsed the Elisabetgrad Hussars and the Tchernigov Dragoons. When Nansouty regrouped, Lichtenstein attacked Caffarelli again, but he held them off with a withering barrage of musket fire until Nansouty raced back in support. With Lichtenstein in disarray, Lannes ordered the 13th and 51st Line regiments from Caffarelli's division to take Blasowitz, abandoned by the Russian Imperial Guard just before General Dominique-Joseph Vandamme's heavy cavalry squadrons could run them down.[51]

Lannes ordered Suchet's infantry forward to meet Bagration's regiments echeloned across the highway. The advance was more deliberate than dramatic: Suchet had a large number of conscripts who required close supervision. They were caught in an artillery cross-fire, losing 400 men in less than ten minutes. Lannes sent Suchet a fresh fifteen-gun reserve with a better range than the Russian guns. Bagration continued his advance, heading for the Santon hill. Aware of the task entrusted to them by Napoleon, a battalion of the 17th *Légère*, supported by its eighteen-gun battery, chased the Russians away, then helped Suchet evict them from Bosenitz.[52]


The Battle of Austerlitz
1000 Hours, 2 December 1805
N
0 1/2 1 1/2 2
SCALE OF MILES
26
Schoumitz
Bosenitz
Santon Battery
Kritchen
V
LANNES
BAGRATION
XXXX
NAPOLEON
Zuran Hill
Posoritz
Twaroschna
Welleschowitz
XXX
MURAT
GARDE
Cossacks
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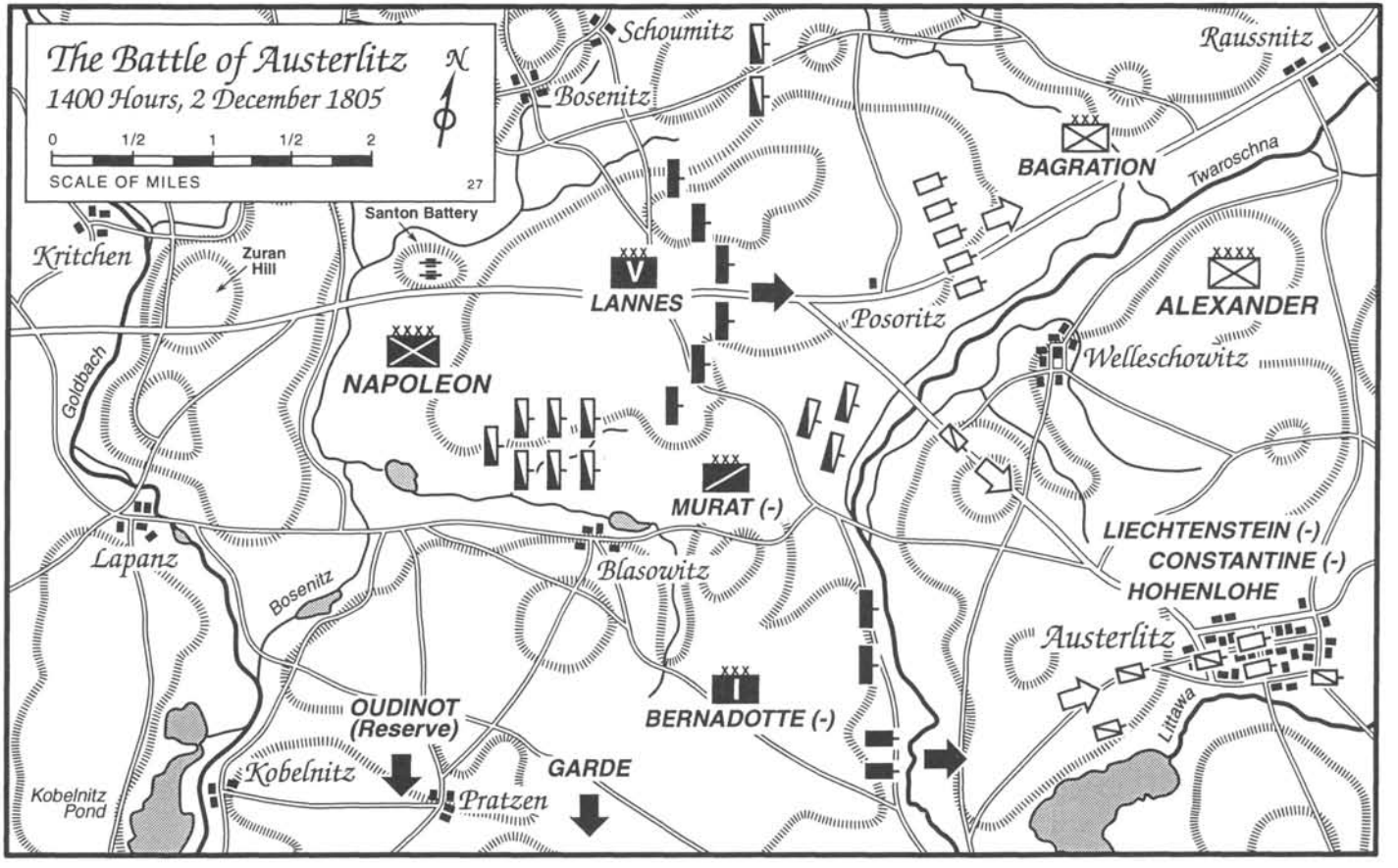
LIECHTENSTEIN
OUDINOT (Reserve)
Bosenitz
ALEXANDER


The Battle of Austerlitz
1400 Hours, 2 December 1805
N
0 1/2 1 1/2 2
SCALE OF MILES
27
Schoumitz
Bosenitz
Raussnitz
BAGRATION
Twaroschna
Santon Battery
Kritchen
Zuran Hill
LANNES
Posoritz
ALEXANDER
NAPOLEON
Goldbach
Welleschowitz
MURAT (-)
LIECHTENSTEIN (-)
CONSTANTINE (-)
HOHENLOHE
Lapanz
Bosenitz
Blasowitz
Austerlitz
OUDINOT (Reserve)
BERNADOTTE (-)
Littawa
Kobelnitz
GARDE
Kobelnitz Pond
Pratzen

Lannes was in a good position by noon to launch a general offensive. He held Blasowitz to the south with part of Caffarelli's division, while the rest had just expelled the Russians from the villages of Krug and Holubitz, inflicting 1,600 casualties in less than an hour; the rest retreated in disorder. The French then turned to support Suchet against the Russian infantry in a bloody encounter with troops determined to resist. The 5th Corps light cavalry, seconded by General Frédéric-Henri Walther's dragoons and d'Hautpoul's cuirassiers, rode in to end the impasse and force the Russians back.[53]

Bagration began withdrawing by three in the afternoon. Lannes had accomplished his necessary but not particularly exciting mission. His troops had held the Santon, kept Bagration from reinforcing the center, and now began clearing the Brünn-Olmütz road. They pursued Bagration past the Posorsitz posthouse, but were too tired to chase him much further than that. An enterprising Austrian artillery officer, escaping with twelve guns from the debacle in the center, halted their pursuit. Bagration reached Raussnitz where, shortly after four, he received orders to retire toward Austerlitz to cover his allies' retreat.[54]

Napoleon exploited the victory that smashed the Third Coalition. He praised his troops publicly, awarded Légion d'Honneur crosses, gave cash rewards to senior officers, and wrote the official bulletin commemorating his inspired strategy and the battle. In the midst of the celebrations, Lannes moved his headquarters to Brünn, taking Suchet and Caffarelli with him. Oudinot and his grenadiers were on the road to Vienna at the emperor's orders.

From the time he had read the emperor's orders at the end of November, Lannes knew his role at Austerlitz was not going to be one of his finer military moments. He thought containing Bagration was not up to his usual standards and a deplorable waste of his real talents. After the pounding they had just experienced, his divisional generals, Suchet and Caffarelli, probably disagreed with their commander's opinion. Still furious with him for his earlier treachery, Lannes resented Soult's featured role in the most crucial hours of the battle, and claimed he could have done a much better job. As so often happens, hours of steady, costly, and undramatic fighting follow the glory of a charge against the enemy. Lannes should have remembered that, and would have under less trying circumstances, but he was still a victim of his desire to impress Napoleon with personal courage and outshine his fellow marshals.

Lannes had hated taking orders from Murat, most of which he thought were idiotic, and constantly turning his corps cavalry over to him. His sentiments toward Murat seesawed between friendship, ridicule, and outright animosity, depending on where they were and what they were doing. For most of the arduous campaign, he literally had to fight to keep his corps up to strength, complaining whenever his divisions were held up through no fault of his or detached for another marshal's use. Since the middle of September, he had waged an ongoing and often losing battle for supplies and funds, never having enough of either. Finally, he had never completely gotten over the illness dogging him since Braunau. Nursing such a list of grievances, Lannes was already in a foul mood after Austerlitz, disinclined to celebrate or do much of anything. The slightest spark struck by a careless hand would ignite a veritable bonfire.

Napoleon struck the spark, probably without meaning to. When the 30th Bulletin of the Grande Armée appeared, spreading its usual mixture of praise, propaganda, and blame, he noted toward the end of it that the 5th Corps had advanced against Bagration as if it were on a parade ground, and gave no credit for holding him at bay. Lannes confronted Napoleon almost immediately. Hovering on the edge of outright mutiny, he demanded to know how the emperor could have allowed such a lie about the 5th Corps to be printed where everyone could read it, or how he could have even imagined it was true at all. Fueled by an overwhelming sense of injustice, he railed on and on until he finally ran out of breath. Napoleon wisely did not interrupt, but he also refused to explain himself or change the bulletin. One observer of this confrontation understood what was going on—he had seen it before and would see it again. He claimed that while Lannes was sincerely devoted to Napoleon, he was much too frank and independent to allow devotion to interfere with his view of things. The two of them "were almost always arguing or sulking about something, but made up at the first opportunity." He had also heard Lannes joke that he was a victim of "an unfortunate passion for such a trollop," and the emperor had agreed. "Maybe so, Jean, but at least you're always here when I need you."[55]

In the middle of all this, Lannes received a letter from his wife, whining that he must not love her because he hardly ever wrote. A typical assumption, perhaps, on the part of those at home, but it did nothing to improve morale; in this case, it was not what Lannes needed to hear. He wrote back, pointing out that an active campaign, especially one as hard as this had been, did not leave much time for chatty letters. He did *not* mention that his writing had been limited to one report after the other to either Napoleon or Berthier, usually both. At least he cut down on excessive military details, admitted he did not want to talk about war, and said he would be home soon. At that moment, he did not realize *how* soon.[56]

The more he thought about it, the fewer reasons he saw for remaining in Moravia. A week after the battle he told his aides they had earned a vacation from all sorts of ungrateful reprobates who did not understand the value of friendship, loyalty, and sacrifice. He decided he had also earned the same respite and left Brünn, galloping back to France. Napoleon knew nothing about this, and certainly had not given him permission to leave. When he heard about the unauthorized departure and the reasons for it—Lannes had not cared who overheard his opinions—he sent Murat to calm him down and bring him back. His choice of envoy was not particularly inspired. Murat reached Vienna without breaking a sweat or allowing any dust to sully his gaudy uniform, but he was too late, naturally. General Auxonne-Marie-Théodose Thiard, also returning to Paris, met Lannes eight or ten days later at Stuttgart and rode the rest of the way with him. Thiard recalled that the marshal was still very irate about Napoleon's slights, and treated him to the full explication. It must have been an interesting journey for the general.[57]

Napoleon let Lannes go. He never reprimanded him for such a monumental breach of military discipline, though he would have dealt harshly with any other marshal—or officer—who dared behave in such a way. It is unlikely, however, that any other marshal—or officer—would have been so flagrantly insubordinate.

Berthier tried to gloss over the situation, claiming that Lannes had permission to leave. Marshal Mortier, assuming command of the abandoned 5th Corps on 15 December, perpetuated the myth.[58]

How could Lannes have gotten away with a stunt that shocked the whole army? He did so because no one's opinion mattered but the emperor's, and he knew it. Perhaps Napoleon overlooked what he considered a momentary aberration and chose instead to remember all the positive contributions the 5th Corps commander had made throughout a long, difficult, and risky campaign. He recognized Lannes's leadership qualities in the engagements resulting in Ulm's capitulation, and his part in capturing the crucial Tabor Bridge allowing the army to pursue the enemy into Moravia as quickly as it did. He had been instrumental in defeating Bagration at Hollabrünn, keeping him from joining Kutuzov until it no longer mattered. Regardless of his preference, Lannes pinned Bagration down and kept him away from the center, where he could have seriously compromised Napoleon's strategy. The emperor knew that the marshal's actions during the campaign required no defense. If he was satisfied, his subordinate should be equally so. Napoleon also realized that only Lannes's Gascon pride and highly competitive nature would keep him from understanding this.

NOTES

1. Archives nationales, AF IV 1689, dossier 2, Lannes to Napoleon, 6 June 1804.

2. P-L Dubray, *L'Histoire du Couronnement* (Paris, 1805), 211–12.

3. Service historique, Les Armées français de 1799 à 1870: camps et corps de 1803, ordre du 1 germinal an 13 [22 March 1805], Carton X^P 19. This advance-guard included Oudinot's grenadier division; Gazan's infantry division, assembled from regiments coming from Hanover and the interior of France; several dragoon regiments; and a light cavalry division. See Ordres de bataille, 19 August 1805, Carton X^P 3; Bureau de la Documentation et des Archives, Boulogne-sur-Mer; Service historique, Troupes speciales: Grenadiers réuni d'Oudinot, 26 ventôse an 13, Carton X^K 32. For more details on the friendship between Lannes and Oudinot, as well as some of their military characteristics, see Kyle O. Eidahl, "The Military Career of Nicolas-Charles Oudinot," Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1990.

4. Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, II, 261; Méneval, *Mémoires*, I, 346.

5. As usual, the Austrian plans were labyrinthine in complexity, and failed to take into consideration the crucial factors of time and distance. For the allied plans, troop strengths and dispositions, see Paul-Claude Alombert-Goget and Jean-Alphonse Colin, *La campagne de 1805 en Allemagne* (Paris, 1902), I, 39–69; Moritz Edler von Angeli, "Ulm und Austerlitz. Studie auf Grund archivalischer Quellen über den Feldzug 1805 in Deutschland," *Mittheillungen des Kaiserlichen und Königlichen Kriegsarchivs*, 2 (Vienna, 1877), 398–400.

6. Service historique, Ordres de bataille, 19 August– 23 September 1805, Carton X^P 3; Service historique, Les armées françaises de 1791 à 1870: Armée des Côtes de l'Océan: avant-garde [Lannes], corps composition, 25 August 1805, Carton C^{2*} 469; decree of 29 August 1805, Carton X^P 22.

7. Alombert-Goget, *Campagne de 1805*, I, 218, II, 278–79; Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 24 August 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*.

8. Alombert-Goget, *Campagne de 1805*, I, 448.

9. Service historique, Situations: 5e Corps, 23 September 1805, Carton C^2 481; Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 20 September 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*.

10. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 9293, Proclamation to the Grande Armée, 30 September 1805, IX, 307.

11. For a discussion of Kutuzov's opinions of his Austrian allies and their position at Ulm, see M. Bragin, *Kutuzov* (Moscow, 1944), quoted in Roger Parkinson, *The Fox of the North* (London, 1976), 58–59.

12. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 9323, Napoleon to Soult, 3 October 1805, XI, 282; No. 9268, Napoleon to Lannes, 26 September 1805, XI, 301; Alombert-Goget, *Campagne de 1805*, II, 39, 415; Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 27 and 28 September 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*.

13. Joachim Murat, *Lettres et documents pour servir à l'histoire de Joachim Murat*, publiés par S. A. le Prince Murat. 2nd ed, 8 vols. (Paris, 1910), No. 2152, Murat to Napoleon, 30 September 1805, IV, 52. Murat's cavalry was no more exhausted than either Lannes's infantry or Oudinot's grenadiers; at least the cavalry had ridden to Rastadt.

14. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances: Journal historique du 5e Corps de la Grande Armée 1805: Journaux de marche et d'opérations, emplacements, itinéraires, plans et croquis, No. 10, 5e Corps, 2 October 1805, Carton MR 627; Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Berthier, 3 October 1805, Carton C^2 4.

15. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 3 October 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 9321, Napoleon to Lannes, 3 October 1805, XI, 340–41.

16. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 4 October 1805; Lannes to Berthier, 4 October 1805, Carton C^2 4.

17. Lannes to Berthier, 6 October 1806, quoted in Alombert-Goget, *Campagne de 1805*, II, 857–58; Raymond Aymery Philippe Joseph de Montesquiou-Fézensac, *Souvenirs militaires de 1804 à 1814* (Paris, 1863), 71; Berthier to Marmont, 9 October 1805, Marmont, *Mémoires*, II, 350–51.

18. Alombert-Goget, *Campagne de 1805*, III, 19; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, official report of combat at Wertingen, written the end of December 1805, Carton C^2 9.

19. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 8 October 1805, Carton C^2 4; Cahier de correspondance du chef-d'état-major du 5e Corps, du 20 septembre au 16 décembre 1805, Compans's report of 8 October 1805, Carton C^{2*} 381*. See Alombert-Goget, *Campagne de 1805*, III, 29; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 117; Lannes, *Le Maréchal Lannes*, 70.

20. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Berthier, 9 October 1805, C^2 4; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 9357, Napoleon to Lannes, 9 October 1805, XI, 366–67.

21. Lannes to Murat, 12 October 1805, quoted in Colbert, *Traditions et souvenirs*, III, 324–25; See Murat, *Lettres et documents*, No. 2179, Murat to Napoleon, 13 October, IV, 78; Général Philippe-Paul de Ségur, *Histoire et mémoires par le général comte de Ségur*, 2nd

ed. (Paris, 1877), II, 380. For additional evidence, see Alombert-Goget, *Campagne de 1805*, III, 70.

22. Murat, *Lettres et documents*, No. 2179, Murat to Napoleon, 13 October 1805, IV, 77–78. Murat told Ney it was impossible for the 5th and 6th corps to coordinate their marches unless their orders came from a single source, such as himself. See Murat to Ney, 4 October 1806, quoted in Henri Bonnal, *La vie militaire du maréchal Ney, duc d'Elchingen, prince de la Moscowa*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1910), II, 106. General August Colbert, commanding the cavalry in Ney's 6th Corps, wrote that "Lannes and especially Ney resented having to submit to the orders of their former comrade." Colbert, *Traditions et souvenirs*, III, 312. See also: De Ségur, *Histoire et mémoires*, II, 390–91. Lannes did not participate in the combat at the Michelsberg Heights; he remained with Napoleon at the abbey. However, the 17th *Légère* from Suchet's division fought at the Michelsberg Heights with Ney. At one point, the 17th, fighting with the 50th Line regiment from the 6th Corps, evidently attempted a bit of military one-upmanship. The resulting assault against the Austrians carried both regiments to the gates of Michelsberg, and cost both regiments the lives of their colonels. Bonnal, *Maréchal Ney,* II, 175. Bonnal also repeated the story of Lannes's pulling the emperor out of harm's way, as well as Ney's refusal to share the glory of the victory.

23. Service historique, Correspondance du 5e Corps, 14 October 1805, Carton C^{2*} 381*; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 16 October 1805, Carton C^2 5; Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 18 October 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*; Thoumas, *Lannes,* 103.

24. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 21 October 1805, Carton C^2 5; Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 23 October 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*; Service historique, Mémoires Reconnaissances, Journal du 5e Corps, October 1805, Carton MR 627; Service historique, Correspondance du 5e Corps, order of 26 October 1805, Carton C^{2*} 381*. Compans instructed all the divisional generals to issue at least three days' worth of rations, including the beer. The 5th Corps' strength, present at Landshut, was: Oudinot—9,329; Gazan—6,982; Suchet—7,906; Treillard's light cavalry division—758. Service historique, Correspondance du 5e Corps, order of 26 October 1805, Carton C^{2*} 381*; Situations: V Corps, 26 October 1805, Carton C^2 481.

25. Aleksandr Ivanovich Mikhailovski-Danilevski. *Relation de la campagne de 1805 [Austerlitz]*, trans. Léon Narischkine (Paris, 1846), 77. Mikhailovski-Danilevski participated in the 1805 campaign, and his work is valuable for fairly accurate Russian troop dispositions and strengths. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 27 October 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*; Alombert-Goget, *Campagne de 1805*, IV, 41, 43; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 30 October 1805, Carton C^2 5.

26. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 30 October 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*; Service historique, Correspondance du 5e Corps, Compans to Oudinot, 30 October 1805, Carton C^{2*} 381*.

27. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 2 November 1805, Carton C^{2*} 163*; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Berthier, 1 November 1805, Carton C^2 7.

28. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, order of 2 November 1805, V Corps, Carton C^2 7.

29. Mikhailovski-Danilevski, *Campagne de 1805*, 124–25.

30. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 4 November 1805, Carton C^2 7; Service historique, Mémoires Reconnaissances, Journal du 5e Corps, 5 November 1805, Carton MR 627; Grande Armée, Situations, 1–6 November 1805, Carton C^2 481.

31. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 7 November 1805, Carton C^2 7.

32. Service historique, Correspondance du 5e Corps, Compans to Oudinot and Suchet, 9 November 1805, Carton C^{2*} 381*.

33. Alombert-Goget, *Campagne de 1805*, IV, 130.

34. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 13 November 1805, Carton C^2 7.

35. Frederick Louis Huidekoper,"The Surprise of the Tabor Bridge by Prince Murat and Marshal Lannes, 13 November 1805," *The Military Service Institution of the United States Journal* (May–June 1905):513–14. There are numerous other sources for the capture of the Tabor Bridge, from the participants on both sides, contemporary observers, formal reports, and later historical reconstructions. For some reason this affair in the 1805 campaign not only captured the bridge but the imagination. In the final analysis, it was a supremely clever bit of Machiavellian military bravado, executed by two consummate con artists, Lannes and Murat. See Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Belliard to Berthier, 13 November 1805, Carton C^2 7; "Passage du pont de Tabor à Vienne," communication de M le vicomte de Grouchy, *La Nouvelle révue rétrospective* 7 (1897):162–66; Karl August Schimmer, *Die Französischen Invasionen in Österreich und die Franzosen in Wien in den Jahren 1805 und 1809* (Vienna, 1846), 15–20; Marmont, *Mémoires*, II, 336–38; Marbot, *Mémoires*, I, 237–40; de Ségur, *Histoire et mémoires*, II, 437–38.

36. Huidekoper, "Tabor Bridge," 515; Schimmer, *Französischen Invasionen*, 17; De Ségur, *Histoire et mémoires*, II, 439.

37. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Belliard to Berthier, 13 November 1805, Carton C^2 7; Grouchy, "Passage du pont," 164.

38. Marmont, *Mémoires*, I, 238; Huidekoper, "Tabor Bridge," 518.

39. Bourrienne, *Memoirs*, III, 17–18.

40. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journal du 5e Corps, 15 November 1805, Carton MR 627; Mikhailovski-Danilevski, *Campagne de 1805*, 165.

41. See Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journal du 5e Corps, Carton MR 627; Murat, *Lettres et documents*, No. 2247, Murat to Napoleon, 15 November 1805, IV, 153; Mathieu Dumas, *Memoirs of His Own Time*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1839), II, 145. Dumas said Wintzingerode thought Murat was the more gullible of the two marshals; Lannes was indeed "too cynical" to be fooled by talk of a false armistice. Bragin, *Kutuzov*, quoted in Parkinson, *Fox of the North*, 71. For details of the false armistice and the resulting battle at Hollabrünn/Schöngrabern, see Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Murat to Napoleon, 15 November 1805, Carton C^2 7; Mémoires Reconnaissances, Journal du 5e Corps, 15–16 November 1805, Carton MR 627; Mikhailovski-Danilevski, *Campagne de 1805*, 165–67, 169–73; Marbot, *Mémoires*, I, 242–43; Dumas, *Memoirs*, II, 145–46.

42. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Napoleon to Murat, 15 November 1805, Carton C^2 7; Dumas, *Memoirs*, II, 146; Marbot, *Mémoires*, I, 243.

43. Neither Murat's nor the 5th Corps' reports list specific numbers of French casualties. Murat mentioned only the capture of 100 wagons and more than 300 horses from the retreating enemy. For details of the fighting, see Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Colonel Blein, "Campagne de 1805," Carton MR 109; Murat, *Lettres et documents*, No. 2247, Murat to Napoleon, 15 November 1805, IV, 153; François Pils, *Journal de marche du grenadier Pils 1804–1814. Recueillé et annoté par M. Raoul de Cisternes* (Paris, 1895), 18–19. For Russian casualties, see Christopher Duffy, *Austerlitz 1805* (London, 1977), 67.

44. Service historique, Situations: 5e Corps, 15 and 21 November 1805, Carton C^2 481; C. de Fromont. "Journal historique de la division de grenadiers d'Oudinot, recueilli par J. Dumas, docteur en médicine et chirurgien-major du bataillon d'élite du 28e régiment d'infanterie *Légère*, Grande Armée, 5e Corps. Années 1805 et 1806," *Carnet de la Sabretache*, 2nd ser., 9 (1910):490. Oudinot did not return from Vienna until 29 November.

45. See Michel de Lombarès, "Devant Austerlitz sur les traces de la pensée de l'Empereur," *Revue historique de l'Armée* 3 (1947):44; Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 28 November 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*.

46. Général Paul-Charles Thiébault, *Mémoires du général baron Thiébault*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1894–1895), III, 446–47. Thiébault said that nobody was more brave and loyal, or certainly more outspoken, than Lannes; he also said Subervie, Lannes's aide, had been standing outside the door the whole time, and heard every word exchanged from first to last. Thiébault's opinions colored virtually everything he said, and he especially despised Soult. Because of his convenient presence, Napoleon selected Subervie to take new orders to Berthier for the withdrawal. Subervie also spread the story around, discrediting Soult while he praised his fellow Gascon's cleverness. General Rapp, Napoleon's aide, was also present, and recounted the same story. Comte Jean Rapp, *Mémoires du général Rapp, aide-de-camp de Napoléon, écrits par lui-même, et publiés par sa famille* (Paris, 1823), 23.

47. Service historique, Grande Armée: Situations du 5e Corps, 25–30 November 1805, Carton C^2 481.

48. General Stutterheim, fighting with the Austrians in the center, said that Bagration commanded twelve infantry battalions and forty cavalry squadrons as part of the Russian advance-guard. Lichtenstein's cavalry consisted of eighty-two squadrons. See Karl von Stutterheim, *A Detailed Account of the Battle of Austerlitz*, trans. Major Pine Coffin (London, 1807), 223; Mikhailovski-Danilevski, *Campagne de 1805*, 263.

49. See Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 1 December 1805, Carton C^{17*} 163*; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 9530, Berthier to Caffarelli, 28 November 1805, XI, 533; No. 9531, Berthier to Bernadotte, 28 November 1805, XI, 533–34; No. 9535, General Dispositions, 1 December 1805, XI, 537–39. Stutterheim remarked that the impressive French reserve never fired a shot all day. However, he was wrong to say this, because the Imperial Guard saw action on the Pratzen Heights. Stutterheim, *Austerlitz*, 90.

50. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 9541, 30th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 3 December 1805, XI, 546; Stutterheim, *Austerlitz*, 94.

51. Mikhailovski-Danilevski, *Campagne de 1805*, 275–76; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 9541, 30th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 3 December 1805, XI, 548.

52. Service historique, Grande Armée: Situations du 5e Corps, 3 December 1805, Carton C^{2} 481; Stutterheim, *Austerlitz*, 112–13.

53. Mikhailovski-Danilevski said that from the allied side, the battle was nothing more than a series of isolated combats that arose from poor or non-existent communications between the different forces. He also claimed that Bagration commented, "We are going to lose this battle," when he saw the allied troop dispositions early on 2 December. Mikhailovski-Danilevski, *Campagne de* 1805, 263–65; Lombarès, "Devant Austerlitz," 62.

54. For Russian and Austrian casualties, see Mikhailovski-Danilevski, *Campagne de 1805*, 279–80; Stutterheim, *Austerlitz*, 224. For French casualties, see *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 9550, 33rd Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 7 December 1805, XI, 563. The Bulletin claimed that the dead on the battlefield numbered 18,000 Russians, 600 Austrians, and 900 French. The French wounded were approximately 3,000. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Clarke to intendant-général Pétiet, 7 December 1805, Carton C^{2} 9.

55. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 9541, 30th Bulletin of the Grand Army, 3 December 1805, XI, 549. Thiébault also took issue with the bulletin's wording. He thought that, after Masséna, Lannes was the best of all Napoleon's commanders in his ability to analyze a military situation, possessing to the highest degree the quality of inspired personal leadership. Thiébault, *Mémoires*, III, 463; Comte Jean-Antoine Chaptal de Chanteloup, *Mes souvenirs sur Napoléon* (Paris, 1893), 252.

56. Poussereau, *L'Histoire*, 126.

57. Général Auxonne-Marie-Théodose Thiard, *Souvenirs diplomatiques et militaires du général Thiard* (Paris, 1900), 253.

58. The Situations for the 5th Corps of 15 December and later make a fine semantic distinction: they note that Lannes was "absent," while the aides-de-camp and other officers of his état-major were "on leave." See Service historique, Situations, 5e Corps, 15–31 December 1805, Carton C^{2} 481; Correspondance: Grande Armée, Mortier to V Corps, 16 December 1805, Carton C^{2} 9; Mémoires Reconnaissances, Journal du 5e Corps, 15–16 December 1805, Car ton MR 627.

Chapter 7

Revanche on a Grand Scale: Jena, 1806

The 5th Corps' marches were a miracle of speed, energy, and spirit.
—Henri Houssaye, *Iéna*

Lannes reached Paris before Christmas, surprising family and friends who had not expected to see him for months. This time he was more than willing to settle down, with no thoughts for the army, and make the most of his unofficial vacation for however long it lasted. He did not spend much time in Paris in case Napoleon had plans for him. Instead, he went to Lectoure to visit the usual crowds of friends dying to hear his version of the last campaign and to buy more rural real estate to be managed by some of these same friends in his absence. He also spent time and considerable money on a new estate outside Paris in Saint-Germaine-en-Laye, far enough from court, he thought, to be safe. Intent on doing exactly what he liked, Lannes refused the invitations he received, including one from Napoleon, hand-delivered by an imperial aide. "Tell the emperor I'll obey him on the battlefield, but not now—I'm on leave," he told the aide. Evidently Napoleon decided he could do without him at court until his attitude improved, and left him alone.[1]

Louise agreed with her husband's desire to avoid court functions. She had become quite the dedicated young matron, interested in nothing outside the walls of her house. She refused to drag the children off on Lannes's excursions to Lectoure—too far, too much of a provincial backwater for her nouveau patrician tastes, and too full of his plebeian friends. If she visited anyone at all, it was her parents at their recently acquired château in the Marne, where she was comfortable with the small, tight circle of family and close friends, including the imperial physician, Doctor Jean-Baptiste Corvisart. She expected Lannes to go with her, apparently ignoring her obvious double standard with regard to family visits. He did go, once or twice, but more often he went his own way during the

spring and summer of 1806. For all his sometimes bucolic pursuits and moving between town and country, Lannes had a fairly good idea what was going on in the larger world of politics. Until it reached out and touched him, however, he preferred to keep his distance.

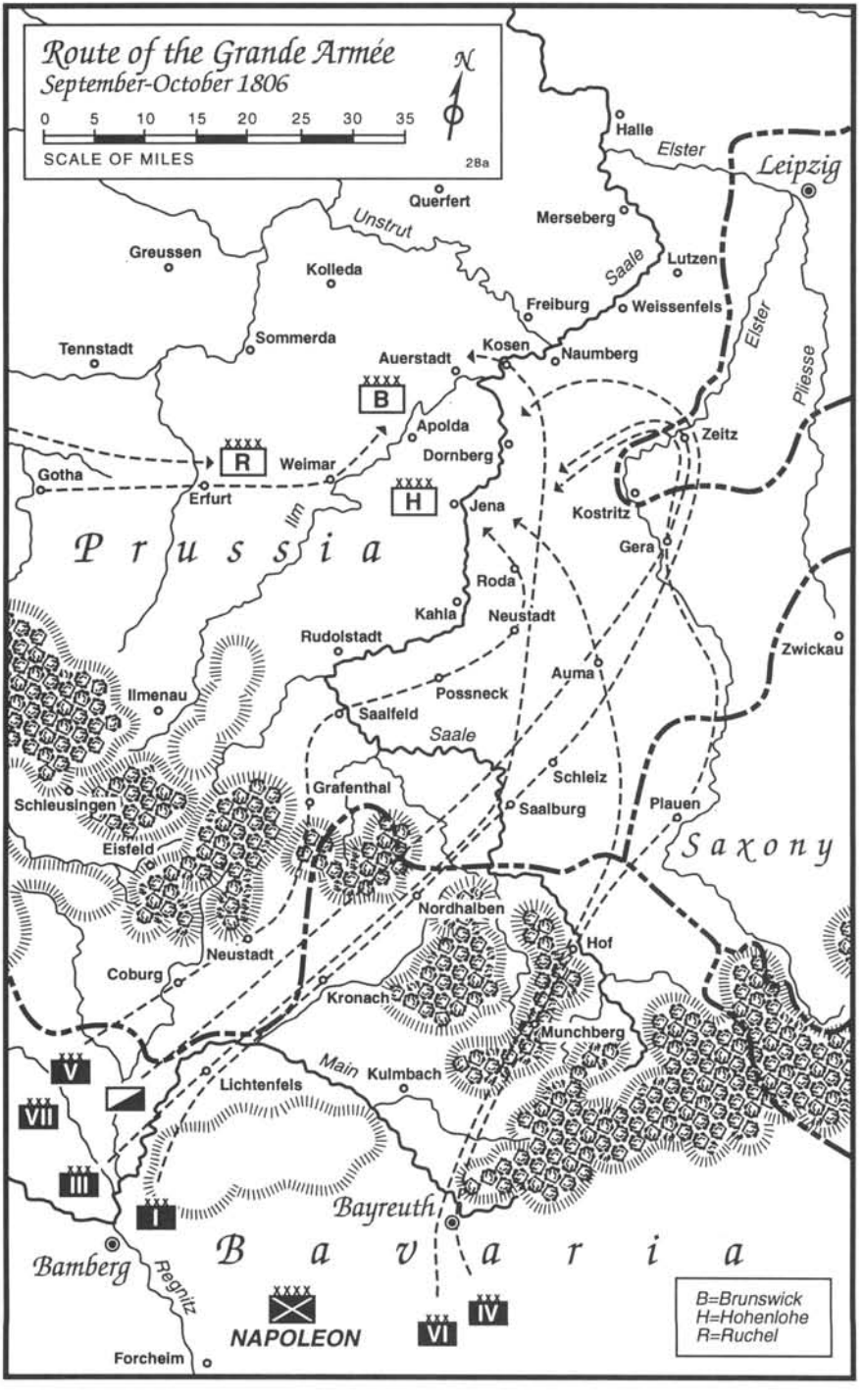
With the Austrians out of the way, at least for a while, Napoleon turned his attention to Alexander I and Frederick William III. The emotionally susceptible Czar of All the Russias and the weak heir to Frederick the Great's Prussia had met one winter midnight in the crypt of Frederick's tomb at Potsdam. The strong-willed Queen Louisa, whom Napoleon allegedly called the "only real man in Prussia," encouraged their alliance. These midnight theatricals did not irritate him as much as Frederick William's earlier insistence on mediating between Alexander and the French, or Prussian minister Christian von Haugwitz's consistently high-handed attitude. Because mediation and superior attitudes had vanished in the sun of Austerlitz, Napoleon embarked on a course that would give plenty of ammunition to the Prussian war party.[2]

This party was not much different in composition and goals from the one that had talked Francis II of Austria into war with Napoleon. Blessed with short memories and cursed with an inflated confidence in Prussian military might, Queen Louisa, young Prince Louis-Ferdinand, the elderly Charles William, duke of Brunswick, Prince Friedrich Ludwig von Hohenlohe, and minister Karl Augustus von Hardenberg tried to influence Frederick William. Their task was made considerably easier when Napoleon created the Confederation of the Rhine in July 1806, then made overtures to the English about the possible return of Hanover to the British crown. Frederick William III responded with a mobilization of Prussian troops the first week in August.[3]

Napoleon could not believe the Prussians really meant to fight him now, even with the promise of Russian assistance, when they had refused to join the much stronger Third Coalition. He had no need to mobilize, however, with the Grande Armée spread from the Rhine to the Danube—160,000 troops including six army corps; 32,000 cavalry; 13,000 south German allies; and 300 guns, many of which had been captured from the Austrians.[4]

The Prussians exceeded French strength by a considerable margin, at least on paper, but they had only 170,000 troops readily available. Although the figures might be encouraging, prevailing military attitudes and abilities of the commanding generals offset numerical strength. Frederick the Great had been dead for twenty years, but his memory—and the memory of Rossbach—lived on. The army clung to Frederickian tactics, emphasizing rigid discipline, drills, and maneuvers, quashing initiative and vetoing any changes in these sacred principles. The commanding generals were senior citizens, willing enough, but physically and mentally unable to lead troops in a campaign as demanding as the one they were determined to launch.[5]

Prussia had assembled three armies by the end of September, and Frederick William issued a declaration of war on 1 October. Napoleon did not bother sending a reply to the king's bellicose letter; he let the Grande Armée answer for him. He intended to engage and destroy the main Prussian army before the


Route of the Grande Armée
September-October 1806
N
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35
SCALE OF MILES
28a
Halle
Elster
Leipzig
Querfert
Unstrut
Merseberg
Greussen
Kolleda
Saale
Lutzen
Freiburg
Weissenfels
Elster
Tennstadt
Sommerda
Auerstadt
Kosen
Naumberg
Pliesse
B
Apolda
Zeitz
R
Weimar
Dornberg
Gotha
Erfurt
H
Jena
Kostritz
Ilm
Prussia
Gera
Roda
Kahla
Neustadt
Rudolstadt
Zwickau
Auma
Ilmenau
Possneck
Saalfeld
Saale
Schleiz
Grafenthal
Schleusingen
Saalburg
Plauen
Eisfeld
Saxony
Nordhalben
Hof
Neustadt
Coburg
Kronach
Munchberg
Main
Kulmbach
Lichtenfels
V
VII
III
I
Bayreuth
Bamberg
Bavaria
Regnitz
NAPOLEON
VI
IV
Forcheim
B=Brunswick
H=Hohenlohe
R=Ruchel

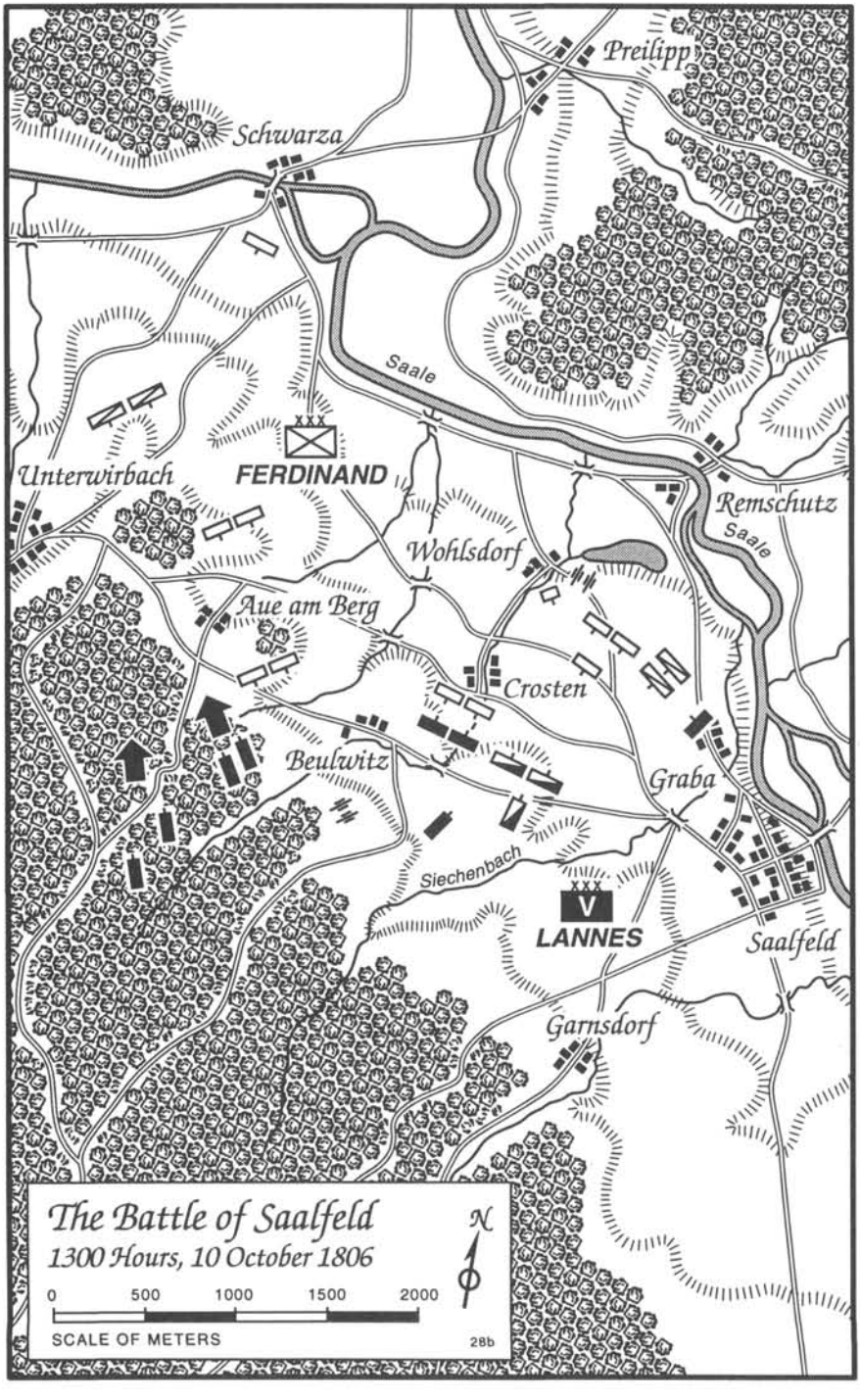
Russians could intervene, and ordered his corps to Kronach, Forchheim, Würzburg, and Schweinfurt.[6]

The 5th Corps had spent the interval since Austerlitz under the orders of two marshals. Mortier had commanded it from December until June, then was replaced by unimaginative Marshal François Lefebvre, who served as little more than a caretaker. Napoleon needed the corps for the Prussian campaign, required more than a baby-sitter, and put an end to Lannes's lengthy vacation. When he reached Schweinfurt the first week in October, Lannes found the 5th Corps well rested, provisioned, and armed, his cavalry supplemented by captured Austrian horses. Lannes also found that Napoleon had not given him any defensive roles. The plan to find and then fight the Prussians required an effective advance-guard and, in the emperor's *bataillon carré* system, the 5th and 7th Corps would serve that function for most of the campaign. Lannes and Augereau were ordered to march toward Coburg, Gräfenthal, and Saalfeld.[7]

When the army moved out on 6 October, Berthier got busy. "Use your cavalry pickets for the next two days to conceal your line of march," he wrote Lannes. "Stop by headquarters when you reach Bamberg for more detailed orders." Napoleon supplied more details, naturally, telling Lannes not to reach Coburg until the 8th because his corps was vulnerable to enemy attack unless he concealed his line of march as long as possible. "You'll probably find the Prussians at Saalfeld by the 9th," he wrote, "but don't attack them until Augereau can support you."[8]

The ink had scarcely dried on the order before Lannes went against it. He arrived in Coburg on 7 October and occupied it with Suchet's division, but found no sign of the enemy. The rest of his troops arrived by nightfall, but Augereau's 7th Corps was at least half a day's march behind. Evidently unconcerned that he had camped out in Coburg a day early, he told Napoleon, "Our spies don't know a thing—the peasants won't say a word, [and] I can't find a soul who'd betray his country, even for a thousand louis." Annoyed, Napoleon wrote back: "What are you doing in Coburg? You were to be there today with Augereau. . . . I'm not fooled by the pretended neutrality of Hesse-Cassel [the principality where Coburg was located], but I am surprised you are when you know my plans and the Prussian army's movements." Lannes had no idea about the finer points of Hesse-Cassel's diplomatic status and knew little of Napoleon's grand strategy beyond what he had been ordered to do for its execution. He knew even less about the Prussian army's movements, because he had just reported that reliable information with regard to the enemy was practically nonexistent. Finally, he did not think reaching Coburg ahead of schedule compromised his corps or the emperor's strategy. He had reason to know, however, that sometimes Napoleon disliked initiative unless the results could be guaranteed in advance.[9]

The 5th Corps left Coburg on 9 October and set off on one of the most difficult marches of its career. The troops covered nearly thirty miles that day over roads that degenerated into logging tracks meandering through the Thüringerwald, then disappeared altogether. Lannes's report, written from the vicinity of Gräfenthal, was an understatement. "The artillery has had rough going


Preilipp
Schwarza
Saale
XXX
FERDINAND
Unterwirbach
Remschutz
Saale
Wohlsdorf
Aue am Berg
Crosten
Beulwitz
Graba
Siechenbach
XXX
V
LANNES
Saalfeld
Garnsdorf
The Battle of Saalfeld
1300 Hours, 10 October 1806
N
0
500
1000
1500
2000
SCALE OF METERS
28b

today; the roads are dreadful, the countryside absolutely devoid of any resources." If Lannes's troops had difficulty, so did Augereau's 7th Corps. It fell further behind, nearly out of reasonable supporting distance. Because Lannes had orders not to attack the Prussians without Augereau's assistance, this could be a problem. However, he had already deviated from Napoleon's instructions once and would do so again if he had to.[10]

Prince Louis-Ferdinand commanded Hohenlohe's advance-guard at Saalfeld. A leader in the war party, Louis-Ferdinand believed in the invincibility of Prussian military might and in his own blue-blooded abilities against a French corps commanded by a marshal of really dubious social background. The young prince had orders to hold Saalfeld long enough for Hohenlohe to reach Auma and rally General Friedrich Tauenzien's troops who had just had an unfortunate encounter with the French at Schleiz. The duke of Brunswick, the Prussian commander-in-chief, was supposed to leave Erfurt in support of Hohenlohe, but he changed his mind. He ordered Hohenlohe to remain where he was and refused to budge. As a result Louis-Ferdinand was dangerously isolated.[11]

The prince saw the glow from 5th Corps' campfires outside Gräfenthal, some ten miles away, but he had no idea of his enemy's strength that night. Lannes was lucky, because only Suchet's division had reached Gräfenthal; Gazan was still struggling along in the dark. At dawn on the 10th, the Prussian prince deployed his forces—some 7,500 infantry, 2,000 cavalry, and about forty guns on the left bank of the Saale. Lannes and Suchet surveyed the Saale valley and saw the Prussians with their backs to the river, another fortunate break. Lannes decided to attack even though Augereau was nowhere near him—he did not think the situation justified waiting, nor did he need all of the 5th Corps to dispatch the enemy.[12]

In spite of the prince's careful though foolhardy dispositions, Lannes was still not sure whether he actually intended to attack him or try to slow him down. He found out when the Prussian guns fired on Suchet's troops advancing from Gräfenthal. By ten in the morning the battle was on, but not as easy as Lannes had thought. The Prussians and their Saxon allies fought heatedly for two hours, but they could not withstand the coordinated onslaught of the French. Although a few rallies delayed the inevitable, when Lannes sent in his hussar regiments, the rallies became a confused retreat. Making up in personal courage for his superiors' lack of initiative, Louis-Ferdinand tried to turn things around, but only succeeded in getting killed. *Maréchal de logis* Guindet of the 10th Hussars offered the prince his life in exchange for surrender, but the prince refused. A few saber thrusts ended the matter.[13]

The combat of Saalfeld was significant militarily and psychologically. The first serious engagement of the campaign, it left Louis-Ferdinand dead, along with 900 of his troops. Lannes had also taken between 1,500 and 1,800 prisoners, four flags, and thirty-three of the forty Prussian guns. The 5th Corps lost less than 100 men killed and wounded. Cognizant of his prize casualty's rank, Lannes sent Louis-Ferdinand's body to the duke of Weimar's palace in Saalfeld. Napoleon did not reprimand Lannes for having violated his orders; in this case, initiative

equaled victory. He told Lannes privately that Louis-Ferdinand's death "was a punishment from Heaven, because [the prince] was the true author of this war." In a more public—and hypocritical—pronouncement, he said, "[the prince's] death was glorious and worthy of notice, the way all good soldiers would wish to die." Lannes's opinion was more straightforward; he knew that rank, no matter how exalted, meant nothing in war, because death could strike down a prince as easily as a private.[14]

After hearing news of the disaster, Hohenlohe retired toward Jena, while Brunswick, accompanied by Frederick William III, moved west to Weimar. Napoleon knew the Prussians had not concentrated to the northeast as he had thought. The confrontation he expected would not occur at Leipzig now but more likely near Erfurt. The lack of precise information bothered him as he relied more and more on reports from his columns. Lannes was too concerned with advancing at all possible speed and watching for the enemy to send in many reports. For the next two days, the 5th Corps covered more than 40 rugged miles, leaving the 7th Corps far behind. Before dawn on 13 October and under cover of a heavy fog, Lannes reached Jena, recently vacated by Hohenlohe's troops. On the Weimar road to his left, Suchet found Tauenzien's advance-guard and chased them toward the villages of Lutzeroda and Closwitz. When Lannes climbed to the top of the Landgrafenberg, a convenient promontory outside Jena, he estimated there were at least 40,000 Prussians in front of him on the plain. Obviously more willing to share information than their rural counterparts had been, several locals told him that, in addition to Tauenzien's main force, another 25,000 Prussians had halted somewhere between Jena and Weimar.[15]

Napoleon told Murat he thought the Prussians would either attack the 5th Corps at Jena or continue their withdrawal. Not intending to be caught short, he ordered Davout from Naumburg toward the enemy's left, with Bernadotte nearby at Dornburg, while Soult and Ney headed for Jena. He sent the Imperial Guard to reinforce Lannes and rode off for the Landgrafenberg to direct the dispositions.[16]

The 5th Corps still faced significant risks during the rest of the 13th and the early hours of the 14th. Although Gazan's division had joined Suchet late that afternoon on the heights, Lannes still had only 24,000 troops literally up in the air on the Landgrafenberg, with the Saale at his back. If the Prussians decided to attack, they could decimate his corps before Napoleon's reinforcements reached him. Had he known that Hohenlohe, acting on the advice of his chief-of-staff, Colonel Rudolph Massenbach, was going to let such a wonderful opportunity slip completely away, he would not have been so worried.[17]

Napoleon arrived at four, climbed the Landgrafenberg, and decided artillery batteries on the heights, especially the Windknollen, could hold the position against any assault. The army had plenty of guns, but they were all below on the plain. The narrow track winding up the Landgrafenberg had been hard enough for the 5th Corps infantry to negotiate; Lannes could not imagine how Napoleon expected to get any artillery up the heights. The emperor saw no problem, but he waited until the tardy Augereau arrived before ordering the guns to move. By then it was full dark and no one could see a thing, especially the track up the

Landgrafenberg. Near midnight a huge traffic jam barred the way. Neither Lannes nor Augereau, assisted by their aides and quite a group of sweaty artillerymen, could budge the caissons wedged against the side of the hill. Cursing, shouting, and fumbling, no one had any success. Napoleon climbed down, took a look, shoved his frustrated subordinates out of the way, and gave the right orders. In minutes the caissons were freed and the guns on their way up.[18]

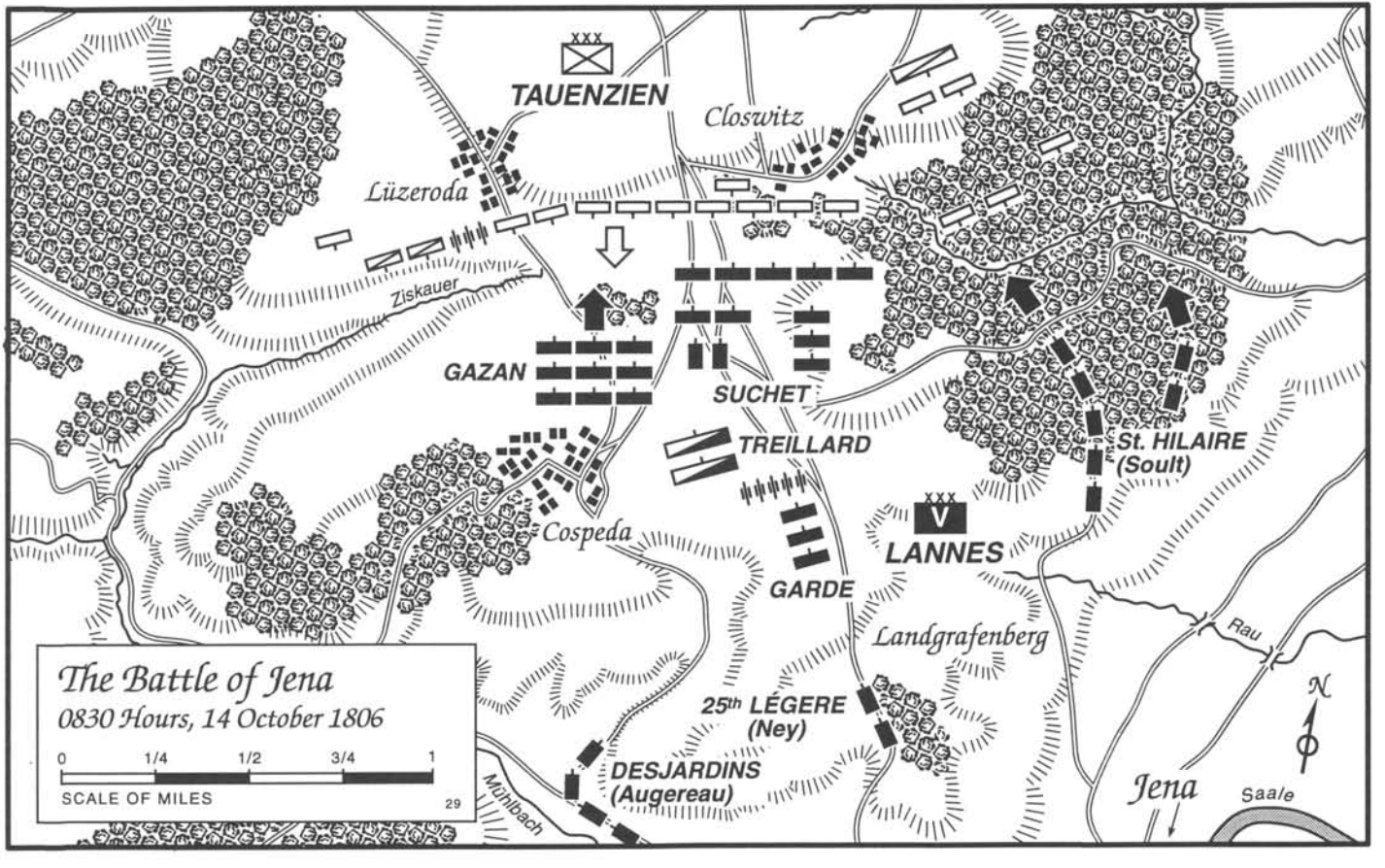
During the predawn hours, the last of the 5th Corps struggled to the top, dragging 40 guns with them. Nearly 26,000 men crowded together in a space too small for half that many. The Imperial Guard climbed up too, sandwiching themselves among the packed ranks. They had gone on a requisitioning foray through Jena, raiding the town's wine cellars and bringing the liberated bottles with them. The Guard grenadiers shared their alcoholic plunder with the 5th Corps throughout the long, chilly night until Lannes and the Guard commanders threatened courts-martial if they did not stop laughing and joking loud enough to wake the enemy in Weimar.[19]

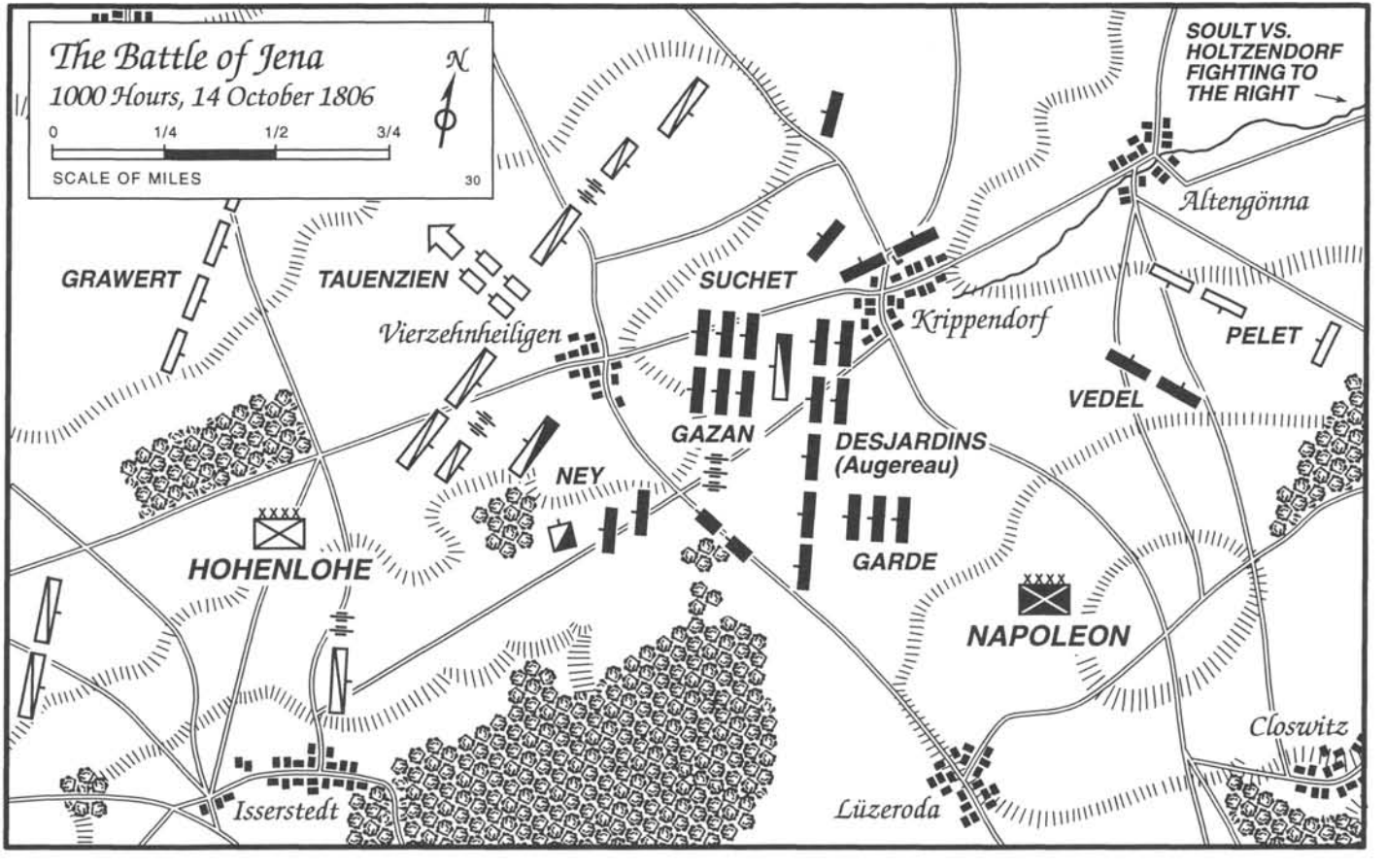
Napoleon did not sleep; neither did his corps commanders. He told them he intended to move the main part of his army onto the plateau northwest of Jena, and told Lannes he would lead the attack at six in the morning. After more than 24 hours without any sleep, Lannes had a hard time concentrating on the map showing the villages of Lutzeroda and Closwitz, which Napoleon expected him to hold until the other corps joined him. By six o'clock he felt about the same as the thick fog blanketing the plain below him, and hoped Napoleon would delay the attack. The emperor did not think fog should deter his plans and ordered the 5th Corps down and forward. The troops were ready to move anywhere after spending all night standing, and the hike down the Landgrafenberg would be sufficient to work out the kinks in their legs.[20]

Suchet's division led the advance with the 17th *Légère* and the élite battalions of the 9th Line, followed by the rest of his troops in column and Gazan's division echeloned behind them. Their target was Tauenzien's advance-guard in Closwitz, although they could see no one through the fog. Literally feeling their way forward, the 5th Corps swerved too far to the left and ran into Augereau's 7th Corps advancing from the Landgrafenberg. For a few startled minutes infantrymen from the 5th Corps stared at infantrymen from the 7th Corps, held their fire, found their way again, and moved off after the enemy.

The first contact began with an almost point-blank artillery bombardment from both sides, seconded by some inspired hand-to-hand street fighting between Suchet and the Prussians for possession of Closwitz. Suchet won the duel, but Gazan had a rough time in Clospeda. He took the village on his second assault, supported by the 5th Corps horse artillery. After two hours of steady fighting, Tauenzien retired to Vierzehnheiligen and his Saxon reserves. By ten o'clock, the plateau belonged to the French, and Napoleon had room to deploy the rest of his forces and engage the bulk of the Prussians.[21]

The deployment was interrupted by Ney's impatient desire not to miss any more of the battle. Without waiting for orders, he rushed onto the plateau with his 6th Corps advance-guard, cut between the 5th and 7th Corps, and finally stopped


XXX
TAUENZIEN
Closwitz
Lüzeroda
Ziskauer
GAZAN
SUCHET
TREILLARD
St. HILAIRE
(Soult)
XXX
V
LANNES
Cospeda
GARDE
Landgrafenberg
Rau
25th LÉGERE
(Ney)
DESJARDINS
(Augereau)
Mühlbach
Jena
Saale
N
The Battle of Jena
0830 Hours, 14 October 1806
0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
SCALE OF MILES
29


The Battle of Jena
1000 Hours, 14 October 1806
N
0
1/4
1/2
3/4
SCALE OF MILES
30
SOULT VS. HOLTZENDORF FIGHTING TO THE RIGHT
Altengönna
GRAWERT
TAUENZIEN
SUCHET
Vierzehnheiligen
Krippendorf
PELET
VEDEL
GAZAN
DESJARDINS (Augereau)
NEY
HOHENLOHE
GARDE
NAPOLEON
Closwitz
Isserstedt
Lüzeroda

beyond Vierzehnheiligen. Realizing he had just outrun any support, Ney formed square to hold off Tauenzien's troops. Napoleon sent in some of the reserve cavalry and ordered Lannes to rescue Ney.

When Lannes arrived, leading Suchet's division, the fighting at Vierzehnheiligen redoubled for more than two hours, with substantial casualties on both sides. French losses might have been higher if Hohenlohe had pressed his attack. For some inexplicable reason, he chose not to, leaving 20,000 of his best troops idle but exposed to the 5th Corps sharpshooters who had enough sense to hide behind garden walls and other cover. Nevertheless, the Saxon reserves kept Lannes and Ney pinned down. Meanwhile, Hohenlohe waited for the dilatory General Ernst von Rüchel, who was taking four hours or more to march six miles from Weimar.[22]

Napoleon launched a general attack against the entire Prussian army—or what he thought was the entire army, minus Rüchel. Hohenlohe counterattacked with some cavalry squadrons and artillery, but the advancing French ran all over them. Believing his position was hopeless, Hohenlohe ordered a general retreat, which began in an orderly manner. Lannes refused to let the Prussians he had been fighting for almost eight hours waltz off the battlefield; he directed his corps artillery at them and fired at their retreating ranks. Not to be outdone, Murat's cavalry joined in, and the retreat degenerated into a rout. An eyewitness said Lannes and Murat apparently forgot their rank, sabering their way into the mêlée and galloping up on the heels of the fleeing Prussians.[23]

Emerging unscathed from the impromptu free-for-all, Lannes pulled up out of range, winded but pleased with himself. Joined by Napoleon's aide, de Ségur, he could not resist bragging about the fun he had just had taunting the enemy. A Prussian musket ball interrupted him, slicing through his red silk sash and ripping his jacket. Holding the torn edges together and ignoring the trickle of blood seeping through his fingers, he told de Ségur, "Look at those fools—they're running like scared rabbits all the way to Weimar!"[24]

Napoleon was enjoying his triumph when he heard what Davout had been doing for most of the day twelve miles to the north at Auerstädt. Even when he realized the battle at Jena had been fought against a secondary force while the 3rd Corps had defeated the main army at three-to-one odds, the emperor was charitable toward his talented—and lucky—subordinate. The bulletin issued on 15 October recounted both battles in fulsome terms, as usual. "Jena has avenged the affront of Rossbach," it declared, at a cost of 1,000 killed and 3,000 wounded. The Prussians lost at least 6,000 men and, by the end of the day, had more than 14,000 captured. The bulletin complimented the 5th Corps, so Lannes had no reason to stomp off this battlefield because of slights and oversights. The bulletin also mentioned his encounter with the enemy musket ball.[25]

The Prussians fled through Weimar and beyond, but Lannes and Murat let them go. The two marshals rode into town, their exhausted troops staggering behind them. Lannes thought he and Murat would spend the night at a comfortable inn, but Murat accepted a better offer. The duchess of Weimar, who just days before had entertained the king and queen of Prussia and whose husband

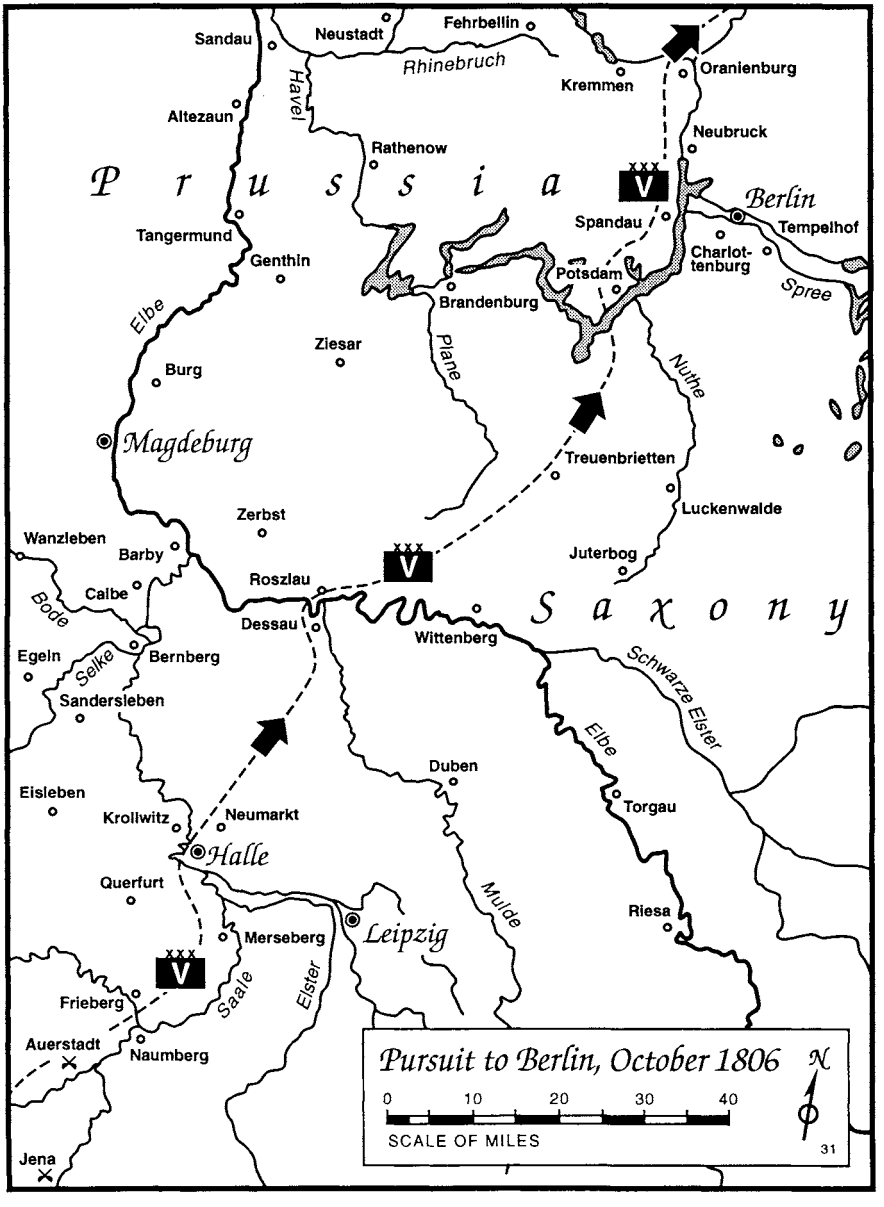
commanded one of Brunswick's divisions, invited them to accept her hospitality. Brushing the dust from his splendidly unconventional uniform, Murat cantered off behind the duchess's liveried servant. Lannes refused to go; hospitable or not, the duchess was still the enemy, and he had not yet been reduced to sleeping with the enemy. He remarked to a bystander that such concerns did not seem to bother Murat. "It's the sort of thing he does—he's the prince, not me." Lannes went off to the inn, where he actually paid for the accommodations. "We aren't looters," he told the startled innkeeper.[26]

The torrent of French troops streaming into Weimar upset the townsfolk, traumatized earlier by fleeing Prussians. Many feared for the safety of their houses and possessions. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote in his diary that night that when the French filled the city he was afraid his precious books and manuscripts might be confiscated for bivouac fires. He sent a friend to Ney's headquarters on 15 October to ask for protection, but the marshal had more on his mind than a writer's documents, and ignored the request. Goethe found an unlikely champion in the unpolished and barely literate Lannes, who dispatched some of his troops to surround the house and keep it safe. Grateful for the protection, Goethe invited Lannes to share his hospitality. He accepted, came to dinner, and made a friend. The conversation between a leading literary figure and a marshal whose favorite means of communication was hardly polite must have been quite interesting.[27]

As tired as he was, Lannes did not care for the possibility of a protracted sojourn in the intellectual capital of Saxony. He hoped Napoleon would rescue him if he made his feelings known. "I've already wasted a whole day here," he wrote on the 15th. "My corps is united, so tell me where you want us to go and we'll leave at once. If you make us stay here none of us will be happy. Put us at the head of the army—we earned the right yesterday."[28]

Napoleon was not in such a hurry. He needed to concentrate his corps and prepare for the next phase—pursuit of the Prussian armies, or what remained of them. He intended to cut them off from Berlin and the Oder River by outflanking them with a rapid crossing of the Elbe. Because the Prussians were in full flight, dispersed and confused, Napoleon thought he could cross the Elbe and reach Berlin first. He ordered Bernadotte's 1st Corps toward the Elbe, followed by Davout, Lannes, and Augereau after they had rested an extra day from their efforts at Jena. Bernadotte, who had done absolutely nothing to assist Davout at Auerstädt, left at once under a cloud of imperial displeasure, accompanied by Soult, Ney, and Murat's cavalry.[29]

Lannes left Weimar early on 16 October for Naumburg, which he reached that evening. The orders waiting for him directed him to Merseburg, eighteen miles away. That changed by morning. "The emperor wants you at Halle as soon as possible," Berthier wrote. "Don't stop at Merseburg. Augereau should be right behind you." The 7th Corps was more than a day's march behind, still unable to keep pace with the 5th Corps, now moving steadily northward at an average of twenty miles a day. Before he left Naumburg, Lannes sent a note to his wife with one of the imperial couriers. He did not elaborate on military details, perhaps


Sandau
Neustadt
Fehrbellin
Rhinebruch
Havel
Kremmen
Oranienburg
Altezaun
Neubruck
Rathenow
Prussia
V
Berlin
Spandau
Tempelhof
Tangermund
Genthin
Charlot-
tenburg
Potsdam
Spree
Brandenburg
Elbe
Ziesar
Plane
Nuthe
Burg
Magdeburg
Treuenbrietten
Zerbst
Luckenwalde
Wanzleben
Barby
Juterbog
Roszlau
Calbe
Bode
Saxony
Dessau
Wittenberg
Egeln
Selke
Bernberg
Schwarze Elster
Sandersleben
Elbe
Duben
Eisleben
Torgau
Kroliwitz
Neumarkt
Halle
Querfurt
Mulde
Riesa
Merseberg
Leipzig
Saale
Elster
Frieberg
Auerstadt
Naumberg
Jena
Pursuit to Berlin, October 1806
N
0
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30
40
SCALE OF MILES
31

having learned his lesson, but referred her to the official bulletins announcing the Prussian army's destruction. "It disappeared after [Jena] and there's no one left to fight . . . it's been like a dream—the once great Prussian army that bragged it would march to Paris has evaporated like fog. . . . Looks like we're going to Berlin—I'll send for you if we spend the winter there." It is very unlikely Louise would have budged from her luxurious house on the rue de Varenne and left her children for a visit to the enemy's capital.[30]

After a short rest on the 18th, Lannes left before dawn the next day for Dessau, thirty-three miles away on the Elbe. He had to reach it before nightfall and capture the Elbe bridge intact. "It is crucial that our army cross the Elbe immediately," Berthier reminded him, but he already knew that. An odd letter from the brother of Frederick the Great reached him the same day. Informed that the French were heading for Berlin, he expressed his concerns to the advance-guard commander in elegant phrases. The prince asked if he could remain undisturbed in his palace, an old man of more than seven decades who had "not much longer to live." Lannes responded in equally elegant language, doubtless the work of a 5th Corps secretary well versed in these finer points, and assured the old prince he would not be disturbed by anyone, least of all the 5th Corps.[31]

Lannes reached Dessau by five that afternoon, almost surprised by such a rapid advance, and sent an aide to tell Napoleon the Elbe bridge had been burned. "It can be repaired if we work around the clock," he wrote. He sent an infantry regiment and most of his cavalry across bridges spanning smaller tributaries; the cavalry would scout for the enemy while the regiment doubled back to cover the repair work. Berthier responded with a warning not to send his cavalry too far ahead until the rest of his corps had crossed the Elbe.[32]

Rebuilding the bridge at Dessau took a little less than forty hours. "It'll be ready by midday on the 21st," Lannes reported. "Suchet and Gazan will leave as soon as the bridge is open." After a brief stop at Wittenberg on the 22nd, Lannes moved on for Potsdam, just outside Berlin, to secure the palace of Sans Souci for the emperor. He entered Potsdam on the 24th, made sure the suburb was suitable for Napoleon's arrival, including Frederick the Great's palace. He requisitioned supplies, ordered his troops not to disturb the townspeople, and sent patrols out to find the enemy. His cavalry commander Treillard reported the Prussians were at Spandau to the northeast; his hussar regiments had exchanged fire with them for several hours, preventing them from leaving Spandau. He thought the rest of the Prussians were trying to reach the fortress of Stettin as quickly as possible. Berthier agreed when he received Lannes's report. "Tell Treillard to hold Spandau and send the 17th *Légère* to reinforce him."[33]

Potsdam was ready for Napoleon to occupy on 25 October. That same day, as a reward for Auerstädt, Davout rode into a silent and shuttered Berlin at the head of his 3rd Corps. By that time Lannes had marched on toward Spandau to take it away from the Prussians. Demoralized and on the run, the enemy knew they were outnumbered and gave up. Lannes sent Victor, his chief-of-staff, to negotiate the capitulation with Major von Benekendorff. The governor of the fortress, humiliated by the proceedings, refused to negotiate or sign the capitulation.

Determined to make sure he accepted the terms agreed on by Victor and von Benekendorff, Lannes went to see him. After what must have been a very brief discussion, most of it one-sided, the governor capitulated, like his fortress.[34]

With Spandau secure, Napoleon reminded Lannes that there were plenty of enemy troops still ahead of him, especially those commanded by Hohenlohe. With instructions to leave his "most fatigued men" behind at Spandau to rest—Lannes thought that would be his entire corps, including himself—the emperor ordered him to Stettin. Both agreed that Hohenlohe was less than a two days' march away. Napoleon added that he thought the Prussians evacuating Oranienburg to the north were not just a column but Hohenlohe's entire force.[35]

Lannes reached Oranienburg the evening of the 26th and found Murat's order for the 5th Corps waiting. "Hohenlohe is heading for Falkenthal and Zehdenick—reach me at Falkenthal as soon as you can—we'll combine our forces to attack by tomorrow." Because Lannes had been advancing as rapidly as humanly possible for the past ten days, Murat's insistence on speed annoyed him. Also, for the last ten days his corps had jogged along behind Murat's cavalry, matching the killing pace, choked by clouds of dust kicked up by the horses, deprived of whatever the sparse countryside had to offer because the cavalry plundered as it went. Lannes shot off a terse note to Napoleon: "Murat ordered my infantry to join him—he can have a column of voltigeurs and the 17th *Légère*, plus six guns. That's 2,000 troops, more or less. The rest are too tired. This is a miserable country for foraging, and we're right behind Murat's cavalry, who strip everything bare."[36]

In addition to his irritation with Murat's comments about speed or lack thereof, Lannes battled the on-going problem of rations. Although he might ignore Murat for the time being, he could not ignore steadily dwindling supplies and his corps' inability to live off the land. He expressed his concerns to Berthier, who sent back a singularly fatuous reply: "Didn't you stock up before leaving Spandau? You should do very well for several days by adding meat and potatoes to the bread you took there . . . besides, catching the enemy is better for your troops than even the best bread." Lannes thought Berthier's suggestion to supplement meager bread rations with "meat and potatoes" was supremely ridiculous—he had just pointed out that the area was barren. Further, his corps had been "catching the enemy" for days now, and their stomachs were still empty. Sergeant François Lavaux remembered what the marshal told them when they complained. "Boys, it takes more than knowing how to fight to be a good soldier—you've got to put up with hunger, thirst, heat, and cold." They had endured all that and more, Lavaux said, Lannes with them.[37]

The next day the 5th Corps moved along briskly by anyone's standards. Napoleon had ordered Lannes to reach Zehdenick as soon as possible and he did, after an eleven-hour march, eight of which were at night, but he covered more than twenty miles without a stop. "We captured 200 prisoners—I'm sending them to Spandau. We're exhausted after marching all night," Lannes informed Napoleon. He was not exaggerating, and the emperor knew it. The 20th Bulletin was full of praise for the "indefatigable Murat," "[General Antoine] Lasalle's intrepidity," and the 5th Corps, "marching full ahead." Napoleon also wrote a

personal note to Lannes, using a dollop of flattery to urge him on after Hohenlohe.[38]

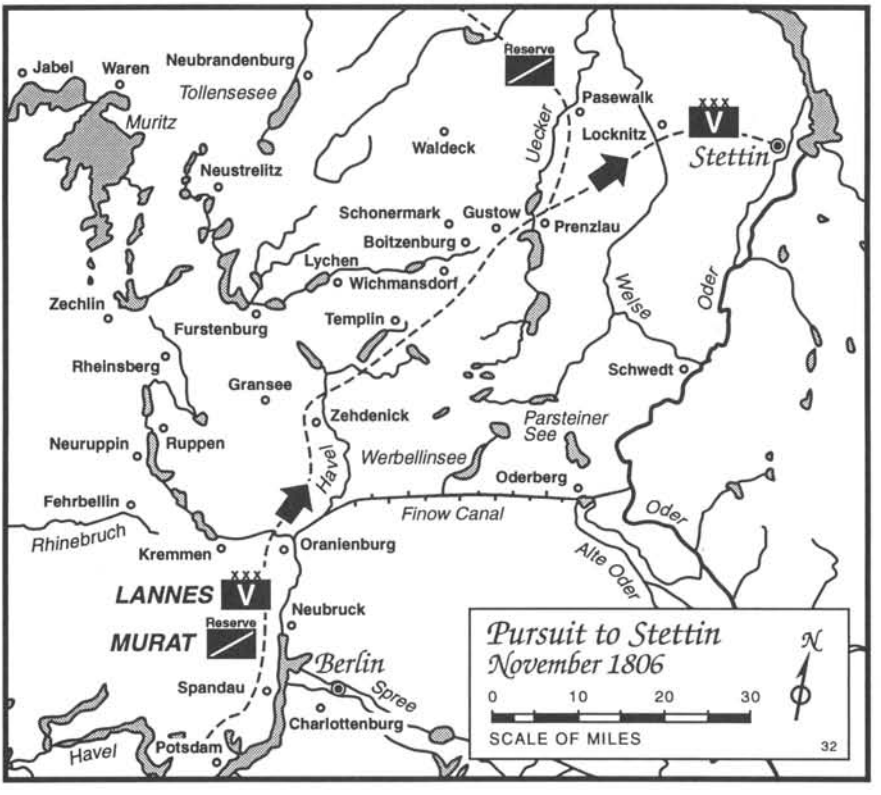
The fortress of Prenzlau fell on 28 October; it took only a small demonstration of Gascon bravado from Murat to force Hohenlohe into surrender. A fortress does not usually capitulate to a few cavalry squadrons outside its gates, but Murat swore that not only was Lannes's entire 5th Corps just down the road but also another two corps marched within immediate supporting distance. Hohenlohe dithered, not realizing that Murat had told him a blatant lie, but Colonel Massenbach made up his mind for him. The Prussians laid down their arms and turned Prenzlau over to the French. The next day, Lannes commented to Napoleon that "the Prussians are so scared that all it takes is one Frenchman to show up and they just quit."[39]

Hohenlohe's surrender ended one phase of Napoleon's plan for the pursuit and capture of the remnants of the Prussian army. On a smaller and more personal scale in the overall significance of the campaign, Prenzlau's capitulation caused a major altercation between Lannes and Murat, as well as an avalanche of correspondence concerning exactly who did precisely what. Lannes fired the first shot with his report to Napoleon conveying information and airing grievances in equal measure. "Although his cavalry was brilliant, Murat will tell you the 5th Corps was right there with him. You said I didn't march fast enough, but Murat can also tell you I was never out of his sight. I don't deserve your criticism—I knew how important it was to capture Hohenlohe."[40]

While his troops rested on 29 October, Lannes wrote to Napoleon again, in case he might have missed some crucial point. "Hohenlohe's capture was due in large part to [our] forced marches to reach Prenzlau. When Massenbach came out to see if my corps was really there, he was surprised to see me—he said there was nothing he could do but capitulate and count on our generosity." Meanwhile the 22nd Bulletin appeared, announcing Hohenlohe's surrender and containing no mention whatever of the 5th Corps; Lannes might as well have never been in the vicinity. He stopped at Passewalk, gave his corps a brief respite, and dictated angry and sarcastic letters to his staff secretary. Murat got the first one. "I took part in the capture of Prenzlau, but didn't say anything about it to Napoleon because I thought you would. I told him how brilliant you were, but I guess because of your many concerns you forgot I brought you Massenbach, who had surrendered to *me*."[41]

Napoleon got the next one the same day. "I can't read this bulletin to my troops—they'd be too distressed by this oversight. Judge for yourself what my conduct has been in this and all other situations, not to mention that of the 5th Corps." The emperor was the first to respond, attempting to calm Lannes down as a father would do with a recalcitrant teenage son. "Did you really think I don't know about the 5th Corps' forced marches and how you've done everything I asked promptly and well? Such children! I'll prove to you and your corps that I'm well satisfied with your conduct."[42]

Murat wrote next, knowing how volatile Gascon temperaments were, because he had one himself. "Believe me, I give you credit for your zeal and indefatigable


Jabel
Waren
Neubrandenburg
Tollensesee
Muritz
Neustrelitz
Reserve
Pasewalk
Uecker
Waldeck
Locknitz
XXX
V
Stettin
Schonermark
Gustow
Prenzlau
Boitzenburg
Lychen
Wichmansdorf
Zechlin
Furstenburg
Templin
Welse
Oder
Rheinsberg
Gransee
Schwedt
Zehdenick
Parsteiner See
Neuruppin
Ruppen
Havel
Werbellinsee
Oderberg
Fehrbellin
Finow Canal
Oder
Rhinebruch
Kremmen
Oranienburg
Alte Oder
LANNES
XXX
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MURAT
Reserve
Neubruck
Berlin
Spandau
Spree
Charlottenburg
Havel
Potsdam
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activity—I didn't think I had to prove it in writing. Anyway, I'm sending you a copy of my letter to [Napoleon]; I hope it will correct the oversight."[43]

As quickly as Lannes could explode in anger and wounded pride, he could be mollified by a few kind words. However, he never seemed to wonder whether the oil poured on his troubled waters was sincere. Because he was so straightforward and without subterfuge, he assumed everyone else was equally so. Murat's letter made him feel better, and he was quick to reply in a spirit of conciliation, friendship, and a healthy dose of saccharine. "You'll never have more glory than what I think you deserve—I care more about you than you do about me, [but] I'm still your best friend a thousand times over."[44]

The war of words over for the moment, the last major obstacle on the Oder River, the huge, well-stocked fortress of Stettin, fell on 29 October to a handful of impudent and invincible light cavalrymen. They blustered their way into Stettin and captured the garrison. Murat was not far behind with orders. "Stettin has fallen," he wrote Lannes, still doggedly following in the wake of his "best friend." "Occupy it with one of your divisions and have a detachment escort the garrison to Berlin; send the rest of your corps after [General Gebhardt von] Blücher."[45]

Lannes reached Stettin late at night on 1 November, after capturing an amazing assortment of Prussians earlier that day. Four thousand Prussian cavalry had surrendered to General Milhaud's cavalry without a murmur. Some 1,500 artillerymen and thirty guns surprised Lannes in the middle of a street in Passewalk when their commander told him he had been looking for a French officer to whom he could surrender for the past twenty-four hours. Napoleon also commented that he had "without exaggeration, taken [more than] 140,000 prisoners—more than half will go to France. What to do with so many? I'm afraid they'll be the ruin of me."[46]

Lannes was amazed at the supplies stockpiled in the fortress. "More than 200 guns, quantities of powder, munitions, and magazines," he reported to Napoleon. "I'm requisitioning all the clothing and material—the 5th Corps is practically naked. I'll conduct a detailed inventory and send it to you." Lannes found the town full of English merchants, who "weren't happy to see us." Although the munitions were plentiful, food and clothing remained a problem. Most of the cloth was of abysmal quality and unsuitable for military greatcoats in a winter campaign—Lannes swore he would not touch it. Instead he commandeered the English merchants' good woolen cloth. He never said whether he paid for it, but, given his long-standing animosity toward the English, he probably did not. When Napoleon heard about the large stockpile of alcohol, he told Lannes to hold it for the army. "It's going to get very cold, and that brandy may save my troops."[47]

Lannes read the emperor's proclamation announcing the fall of Stettin to his troops; the 5th Corps received considerable mention, all of it favorable. He followed the public display with a bit of ridiculous flattery. "My troops were especially moved by the [proclamation] and shouted 'Long live the emperor of the West.' Do you want me to call you that in future correspondence?" Napoleon wanted no part of this silly sobriquet and it never appeared in future missives from anyone, Lannes included.[48]

The inhabitants of Stettin, saddled with an imperial levy of 500,000 francs, swore they could not possibly pay such a sum. They sent a delegation to meet with Lannes and asked permission to discuss this impossible financial burden with Napoleon, but he refused. Based on his detailed inventory, he knew the value and quantity of everything in Stettin, and he also knew there was plenty of money, in spite of the citizens' disclaimers. Lannes was interested in the money, because the 5th Corps had not been paid for over a month. Napoleon made detailed arrangements to rectify the situation, not only for Lannes's corps but the rest of the army. Part of the corps's back pay would come from Stettin's treasury and "donations" from the inhabitants.[49]

With Blücher's surrender at Lübeck, only a ghost of the once-invincible Prussian army remained. That remnant raced for the Russian border to join Frederick William and his queen, an early nineteenth-century Boadicea, at Memel. After thirty-six days, several combats, two pitched battles, and an astonishing pursuit on a grand scale, the Prussian army disintegrated at the hands of a commander with abilities even Frederick the Great would find difficult to imagine. However, the Russians waited to the east in Poland, and Napoleon, still in Berlin, knew he must deal with them. The pursuit of the Prussians had ended but the pursuit of the Russians was just beginning, and there was scarcely a moment's respite between the two phases of Napoleon's campaign. "You'll receive orders soon to march toward the Vistula. Maintain tight discipline when you reach Poland," the emperor wrote Lannes, and the marshal and his corps broke camp and moved on.[50]

NOTES

1. Poussereau, *L'Histoire*, 37–38.

2. See Thiers, *Consulat et de l'Empire*, VII, 4–5; Charles-Théodore Beauvais de Preau, comp, *Victoires, conquêtes, désastres, revers et guerres civiles des Français, de 1792 à 1815*, 27 vols. (Paris, 1818–1821), XVI, 277–79.

3. Masséna, *Mémoires*, V, 287–90; Oskar von Lettow-Vorbeck, *Der Krieg von 1806 und 1807*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1899), I, 21–23.

4. Service historique, Ordres de bataille September 1806, Carton X^P 3.

5. The duke of Brunswick, by now in his eighties, commanded the first army, with 70,000 troops between Naumburg and Leipzig. Prince von Hohenlohe, approaching seventy, had another 70,000 (including 20,000 somewhat reluctant Saxons) at Dresden, whereas Generals Ernst von Rüchel and Gebhardt von Blücher, only in their sixties, shared 30,000 troops between them at Mühlhausen and Göttingen. For the orders of battle for the Prussian armies, see: Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1806*, I, 29–30; 433–37.

6. As early as September, Napoleon was aware of Prussia's mobilization. He wrote to Berthier on 10 September that "the movements of Prussia continue to be very extraordinary. . . . They need to be taught a lesson." Two days later he wrote to Frederick William III that "if I have to take up arms to defend myself, it will be with the greatest regret that I would use them against you. I would consider this as a civil war, since the interests of our nations are so closely linked." On 1 October, the day of Frederick William III's ultimatum, the emperor informed Berthier that he was leaving that evening at nine o'clock for the army.

See *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 10757, Napoleon to Berthier, 10 September 1806, XIII, 198; No. 10764, Napoleon to Frederick William III, 12 September 1806, XIII, 207–209; No. 10929, Napoleon to Berthier, 1 October 1806, 369–70; Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1806*, I, 31. The emperor outlined his plans in a letter to Soult. The only thing he did not know at this juncture was the precise location of the main Prussian force, and this information eluded him for another nine days. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 10941, Napoleon to Soult, 5 October 1806, XIII, 379–81.

7. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances: Journaux d'opérations et états d'emplacements relatifs aux campagnes de la Grande Armée 1806–1807. Réunis et mis en ordre sous la direction de M. le Lt.-Gal Baron Pelet. Volume III, folio 98, 5e Corps, Carton MR 655; Grande Armée: Situations, 1 September 1806, Carton X^P^ 22. Lettow-Vorbeck placed Suchet's strength at 11,846, Gazan's at 7,543, and Treillard at 1,560. Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1806*, I, 428. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 10941, Napoleon to Soult, 5 October 1806, XIII, 379–81.

8. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 5 October 1806, Carton C^17*^ 164*; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 10961, Napoleon to Lannes, 7 October 1806, XIII, 392–94.

9. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 8 October 1806, Carton C^2^ 30; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 10971, Napoleon to Lannes, 8 October 1806, XIII, 403–4.

10. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 9 October 1806, Carton C^2^ 30.

11. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux de opérations du 5e Corps, Carton MR 655; Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1806*, I, 244–45.

12. Ibid.; Henri Houssaye. *Iéna et la campagne de 1806*, (Paris, 1912), 42.

13. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journal du 5e Corps, 10 October 1806, Carton MR 627; Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1806*, I, 246.

14. Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 11 October 1806, Carton C^2^ 30; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 10982, Napoleon to Lannes, 10 October 1806, XIII, 413; No. 10987, 2nd Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 12 October 1806, XIII, 415–18.

15. Ibid., No. 10982, Napoleon to Lannes, 10 October 1806, XIII, 413; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, 10–13 October 1806, Carton C^2^ 30; Paul Foucart, *Campagne de Prusse 1806*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1890), I, 551.

16. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11000, Napoleon to Murat, 13 October 1806, XIII, 427.

17. Foucart, *Campagne de Prusse*, I, 549–50.

18. See: Marbot, *Mémoires*, I, 297; Jean Savary, *Mémoires du duc de Rovigo, pour servir à l'histoire de l'Empereur Napoléon*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1828), II, 276–77.

19. Jean-Roch Coignet, *Les cahiers du capitaine Coignet* (Paris, 1968), 166–67.

20. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 13 October 1806, Carton C^17*^ 164*; Marbot, *Mémoires*, I, 297–98.

21. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux d'opérations, October 1806, Carton MR 655.

22. Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1806*, I, 260.

23. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux d'opérations, October 1806, Carton MR 655.

24. Philippe-Paul de Ségur, *Un aide de camp de Napoléon de 1800 à 1812* (Paris, 1873), 320–31; Amable-Guillaume Prosper de Barante, *Souvenirs du Baron Barante* (Paris, 1893), 180.

25. Both Foucart and Lettow-Vorbeck placed French losses considerably higher, around 6,000 killed and wounded. Lettow-Vorbeck also claimed that estimating Prussian losses at Jena just on 14 October was difficult, especially the number of prisoners taken at the conclusion of the battle. See Foucart, *Campagne de Prusse*, I, 604; Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1806*, I, 381. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11009, 5th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 15 October 1806, XIII, 434–40.

26. Barante, *Souvenirs*, 181.

27. Robert Steiger, *Goethes Leben von Tag zu Tag. Eine dokumentarische Chronik*, 7 vols. (Munich, 1969), IV, 754, 756–57.

28. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 15 October 1806, Carton C^2 30.

29. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11017, Napoleon to Murat, 16 October 1806, XIII, 445.

30. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 15, 16, and 18 October 1806, Carton C^{17*} 164; Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux d'opérations, October 1806, Carton MR 655; Foucart, *Campagne de Prusse*, II, 139; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 162.

31. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 19 October 1806, Carton C^{17*} 164*; Lannes, *Le maréchal Lannes*, 89–90.

32. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 20 October 1806, Carton C^2 30; Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 20 October 1806, Carton C^{17*} 164. See *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11032, Napoleon to Lannes, 20 October 1806, XIII, 458–59.

33. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 20, 23, and 24 October 1806, Carton C^2 30; Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 21, 23, and 25 October 1806, Carton C^{17*} 164*.

34. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 25 October 1806, Carton C^2 30; Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 25 October 1806, Carton C^{17*} 164*. It is possible that Napoleon did not want Prussian prisoners in Berlin to further demoralize an already unhappy populace, and he realized that prisoners and the wounded and sick of either army would strain the resources of the capital. Spandau, on the other hand, had ample supplies and facilities for both incarceration and convalescence.

35. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 26 October 1806, Carton C^2 30; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11084, Napoleon to Lannes, 26 October 1806, XIII, 508.

36. Murat, *Lettres et documents*, No. 2606, Murat to Lannes, 26 October 1806, IV, 410–11; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 26 October 1806, Carton C^2 30.

37. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 27 October 1806, Carton C^{17*} 164*; François Lavaux, *Mémoires de François Lavaux, sergent au 103e ligne* (Paris, 1894), 201.

38. According to Foucart, who seemed impressed with distances covered under appalling conditions, the 5th Corps's marches were exemplary. On 24 October, they covered

the sixteen miles from Spandau to Oranienburg in less than seven hours. With only a few hours' respite, they continued on to Zehdenick, an eleven-hour march that covered more than thirty-five miles, most of which were at night with stops of less than three hours. Foucart estimated that Lannes's corps covered more than seventy miles in fifty hours, hampered by difficult roads, darkness, and following in the wake of Murat's cavalry. Foucart, *Campagne de Prusse*, I, 425-26; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 27 October 1806, Carton C^2 30; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11098, 20th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 27 October 1806, XIII, 523-24; No. 11100, Napoleon to Lannes, 28 October 1806, XIII, 525.

39. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 29 October 1806, Carton C^2 30.

40. Ibid., Lannes to Napoleon, 28 October 1806.

41. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11111, 22nd Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 29 October 1806, XIII, 533-34. Once begun, Lannes found it difficult to stop; he reminded Murat of everything that the 5th Corps had done since 26 October, in minute detail. Lannes to Murat, 31 October 1806, quoted in Foucart, *Campagne de Prusse*, II, 423-25; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 31 October 1806, Carton C^2 30.

42. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11136, Napoleon to Lannes, 1 November 1806, XIII, 554.

43. Murat, *Lettres et documents*, No. 2622, Murat to Lannes, 31 October 1806, IV, 426.

44. Ibid., No. 2629, Lannes to Murat, 1 November 1806, IV, 434. Lannes wrote this letter himself, and used the familiar "tu" throughout. Evidently he thought that because he addressed the emperor that way in conversation, he could certainly continue to do so with Napoleon's brother-in-law. What is also interesting and perhaps puzzling is that while Lannes could swear undying friendship for Murat, he could also denounce him to an amazed audience as nothing more than a rooster who crowed after every victory in which he had no significant part. See D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, II, 419-20.

45. Murat, *Lettres et documents*, No. 2626, Murat to Lannes, 29 October 1806, IV, 423-24.

46. Houssaye, *Iéna*, 227-28; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11236, Napoleon to Dejean, 12 November 1806, XIII, 641.

47. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 1 and 2 November 1806, Carton C^2 30; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11232, Napoleon to Daru, 8 November 1806, XIII, 619.

48. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11120, 23rd Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 30 October 1806, XIII, 541-43; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 1 November 1806, Carton C^2 30; Lannes to Napoleon, 2 November 1806, quoted in Foucart, *Campagne de Prusse*, II, 646. Foucart could not let this bit of hyperbole pass without a comment. "What fawning! The style of the times really shows here," he noted. Foucart, *Campagne de Prusse*, II, 598.

49. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 6 November 1806, Carton C^2 30; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier* No. 11213, Napoleon to Daru, 8 November 1806, XIII, 619.

50. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11221, Napoleon to Lannes, 9 November

1806, XIII, 623.

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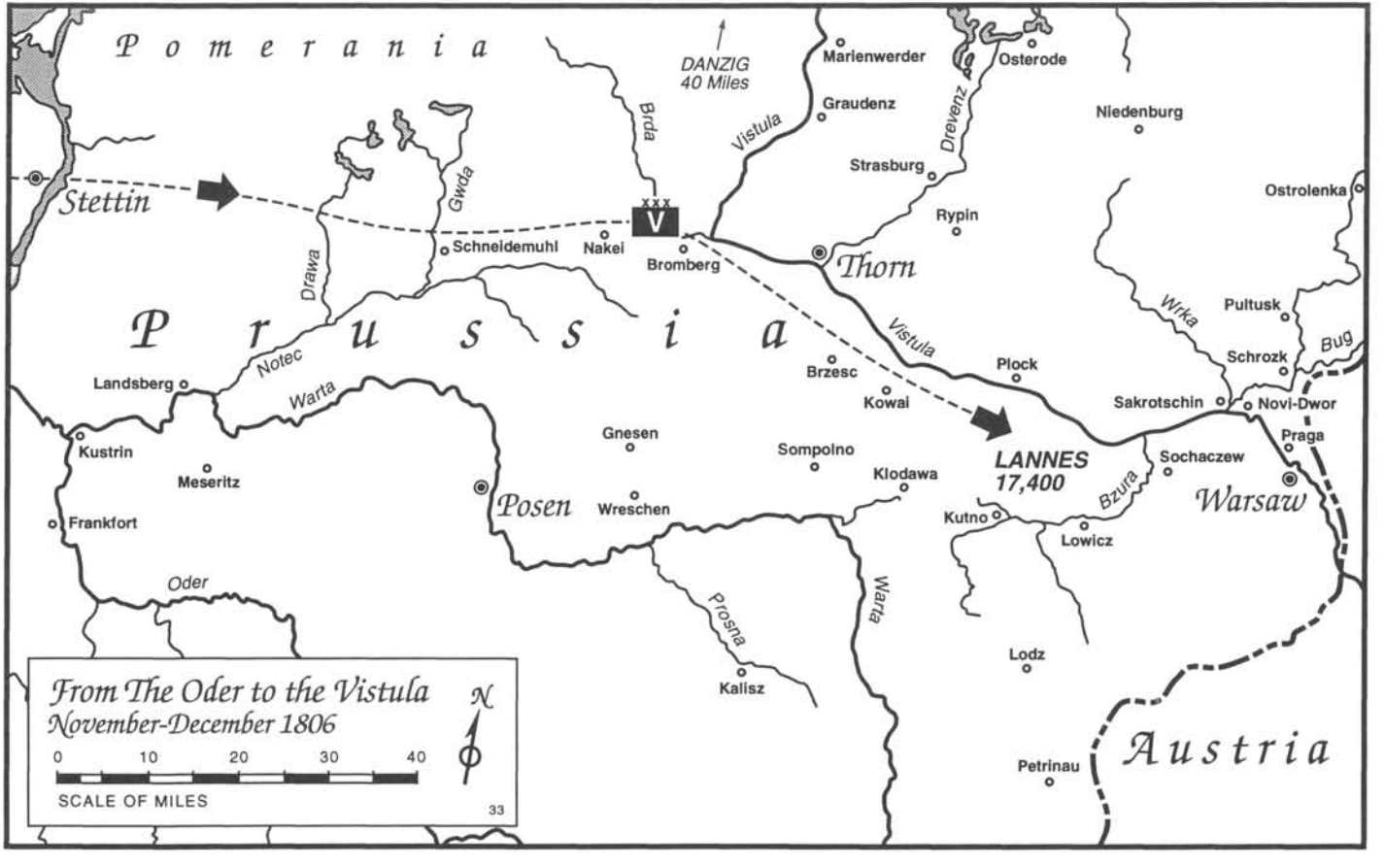
Chapter 8

Advance-guard Extraordinaire: Friedland, 1807

Tell the emperor not to worry—I'm on my way.
—Lannes to Montesquiou-Fézensac

Napoleon read preliminary reports from his advance-guard that the Russians were advancing toward the Vistula. If that were true, he planned to cross the Vistula now, rather than at the beginning of a spring campaign, and establish winter quarters to stock up on much needed supplies. He also planned to win Polish support for his offensive against their traditional enemies and then, with the army centrally located, capture the ports of Danzig and Stralsund. Davout's 3rd Corps advanced toward Posen to verify the Russian position and hold the town as a supply base. When the marshal encountered no enemy opposition, Napoleon moved on to Warsaw. The army's line therefore extended from Thorn on the upper Vistula to Warsaw to the southeast. The 5th Corps, with Murat, Bernadotte, and Soult, marched for Thorn.[1]

If the campaign against the Prussians had been rough—exhausting forced marches, unrelenting pursuits and skirmishes, half-rations or none at all—the winter months in Poland would be a nightmare. Lannes already had a pretty good idea what he was facing, in spite of the emperor's optimism about Polish friendship and supply stockpiles. Friendship and supplies were in Warsaw, not where he and his corps were. "You'll lack everything if you go with us—food, lodging, shelter, beds—but you're welcome to our military hospitality, such as it is," he told Baron Barante, who tagged along with the 5th Corps on his way to Danzig. Out of place among the marshal's staff and dismayed by Lannes's gloomy predictions, the baron found a more sympathetic traveling companion in the 5th Corps ordonnance officer, who looked after him as well as he could. Barante later remarked that although Lannes had been cordial enough, he was certainly *very* military, and seemed not to mind the prospect of marching through


Pomerania
DANZIG
40 Miles
Marienwerder
Osterode
Graudenz
Niedenburg
Brda
Vistula
Drevenz
Strasburg
Ostrolenka
Stettin
Gwda
Rypin
XXX
V
Schneidemuhl
Nakel
Bromberg
Thorn
Drawa
Wirka
Pultusk
Prussia
Vistula
Bug
Schrozk
Notec
Brzesc
Plock
Landsberg
Warta
Kowai
Sakrotschin
Novi-Dwor
Praga
Gnesen
Sompolno
LANNES
17,400
Sochaczew
Kustrin
Klodawa
Meseritz
Posen
Wreschen
Bzura
Warsaw
Kutno
Frankfort
Lowicz
Oder
Prosna
Warta
Lodz
Kalisz
Austria
Petrinau
From The Oder to the Vistula
November-December 1806
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SCALE OF MILES
33

Poland without any of the basic necessities. Lannes minded very much, but he would not have shared his misgivings with a civilian. Those he reserved for Napoleon, Berthier, and the army commissariats.[2]

As long as the 5th Corps was west of the Oder, the troops found the going easy under sunny and pleasant skies, and if they foraged diligently, they managed to eat well enough. Everything changed for the worse once they approached the Vistula. The winter sun vanished behind constant rain, sleet, or snow. The terrain became increasingly rugged, with long stretches of sticky mud that trapped the artillery and slowed the horses and men who slogged through it. Even the most diligent foraging revealed nothing, and the corps ran low on bread, wine, and beer. The evening bivouacs were spent in primitive shelters; most of the time officers and men competed with cows and pigs for ramshackle sheds and lean-tos. Realizing that Lannes had not exaggerated—he had probably erred on the side of optimism—Barante lost count of the times he slept in straw recently occupied by cows, and noted the marshal fared no better. After a few days of such conditions, the French revised their opinion of Poland. Lannes dismissed it out of hand. "How can the Poles call this place a country? It's the worst in Europe, and I thought I'd already seen the worst." And the winter had just begun.[3]

By 10 November, Lannes had reached Schneidmühl but found nothing there worth picking through. Worried about his troops and feeling distinctly fatigued, he shared his bitterness with his wife. "The 5th Corps hasn't gotten the credit it deserves but I'm not surprised—that's more or less been the case the whole time. Not a day goes by that I haven't shown the emperor he doesn't have a better friend than me and not a day goes by that he doesn't piss me off. Maybe he thinks I try *too* hard. . . . I'd rather be with you and the children." Regardless of his personal feelings, Lannes knew Napoleon wanted Thorn. General Ernst Lestocq's Prussian column had destroyed the bridge over the Vistula there, so he reached Thorn on the 18th, after a week's march through a frigid wind and on starvation rations for most of the way. Because he could not take Thorn without reinforcements and none were anywhere near him, he had to let Lestocq slip away without firing a shot.[4]

Barante realized if he remained with the 5th Corps he would never reach Danzig. Because the long-suffering baron was ill equipped to set off alone, he followed Lannes through destitute villages and barren countryside, wondering what they could find to sustain them until they reached Warsaw. Camped outside Thorn, Lannes shared his increasingly cynical views with Napoleon. "Poland's got two types of people," he wrote. "The first is very rich and favors the Prussian king; the second and by far most numerous is somewhere between peasants and animals—absolutely no initiative. I don't see how anybody can judge the Poles by the ones living in Warsaw. You'd better take a look at the misery and degradation in the countryside—it's impossible to change Poland."[5]

Murat reached the comforts of Warsaw on 28 November, leaving the 5th Corps thirty miles to the west between Lowicz and Sochaczew. Lannes halted for the night and took advantage of the brief rest to illuminate Murat on the subject of deprivations and hard times. "We've had nothing to eat for the past three days and

there's nothing here at Sochaczew. . . . My generals and colonels report their men are unhappy and complaining—can't say I blame them." Though he was more concerned about his men, he let Murat also know how he was feeling. "I can't ride and don't know when I'll be able to," he wrote. He attributed his failing health to the wound he had received at Jena. Because the wound had been so negligible and the symptoms he described to Murat were hardly consistent with being grazed by a musket ball, it is more likely he had contracted typhus. The disease had already made serious inroads in the army; Larrey characterized it as endemic to the barren country and exacerbated by harsh conditions. In any case, Lannes got Murat's attention for once—he advised his colleague to reach Warsaw as soon as he could, by whatever means he could, and get medical attention. Lannes refused to leave his corps to its own doubtful resources, but continued to send Murat, surrounded by plenty of supplies in Warsaw, a barrage of gloomy reports. "Suchet is completely out of provisions, [and] his men are in sad shape. Gazan says his whole division is on the verge of starvation; somebody has to get supplies from Warsaw to us. There's been no bread for the past five days—we're in dire straits."[6]

Baron Barante, suffering with the rest of the 5th Corps and still wondering if he would ever reach Danzig, had just enough energy to admire Lannes's conduct during these difficult times. "Though I was completely ignorant of military matters, I knew he had the qualities of a great soldier. I admired his vigilance, his precautions, his unceasing activity in spite of his illness. . . . He did everything with total calmness and never complained." Of course the baron had never been on the receiving end of one of Lannes's complaint letters.[7]

Murat sent bread rations and other supplies to Sochaczew and insisted that Lannes come to Warsaw as soon as everything arrived "I'll be there on the 6th," Lannes wrote. "By the way, Napoleon isn't happy with me about the Stettin [treasury]—I'll tell you about that when I see you." The emperor never said anything to Lannes about the Stettin funds, but Berthier had, and Lannes interpreted Berthier's rebukes as an extension of Napoleon's displeasure. He could not understand all the fuss, especially when he had told Napoleon he was appropriating some of the Stettin levies to pay his troops. Evidently because he did not wait for the army paymasters to arrive and handle the matter of back pay at their own bureaucratic speed, Lannes ran afoul of Berthier's insistence on proper authorization and proper paperwork. Berthier also went so far as to infer that Lannes took some of the money for his personal use, an accusation quite unfounded. Because he was unfortunately too sensitive to every nuance of Napoleon's opinion, it is understandable how the inference had upset him. Lannes did not especially like Berthier anyway, and it is probable his thinly veiled animosity was reciprocated.[8]

Anxious for as much rest as he could get and even thinking he might not mind consulting one of the army's many surgeons, Lannes reached the outskirts of Warsaw a day early. He received new orders before he had a chance to do either; the 5th Corps would occupy the suburb of Praga, replacing Davout, who had moved north along the Bug River. When his troops settled down at Praga, Lannes

hitched a ride into Warsaw on a supply wagon. Having been warned by Murat and after taking a quick look at his exhausted, ill subordinate, Napoleon ordered him to stay put and sent for Doctor Larrey. The doctor did what he could, but it was not much; Lannes was just one of hundreds of officers and men getting sick in alarming numbers. Larrey wondered how his medical supplies would last through the winter and how the army could manage an offensive in such a debilitated state. Before the campaign was over, even he would succumb to typhus, "the scourge of the army."[9]

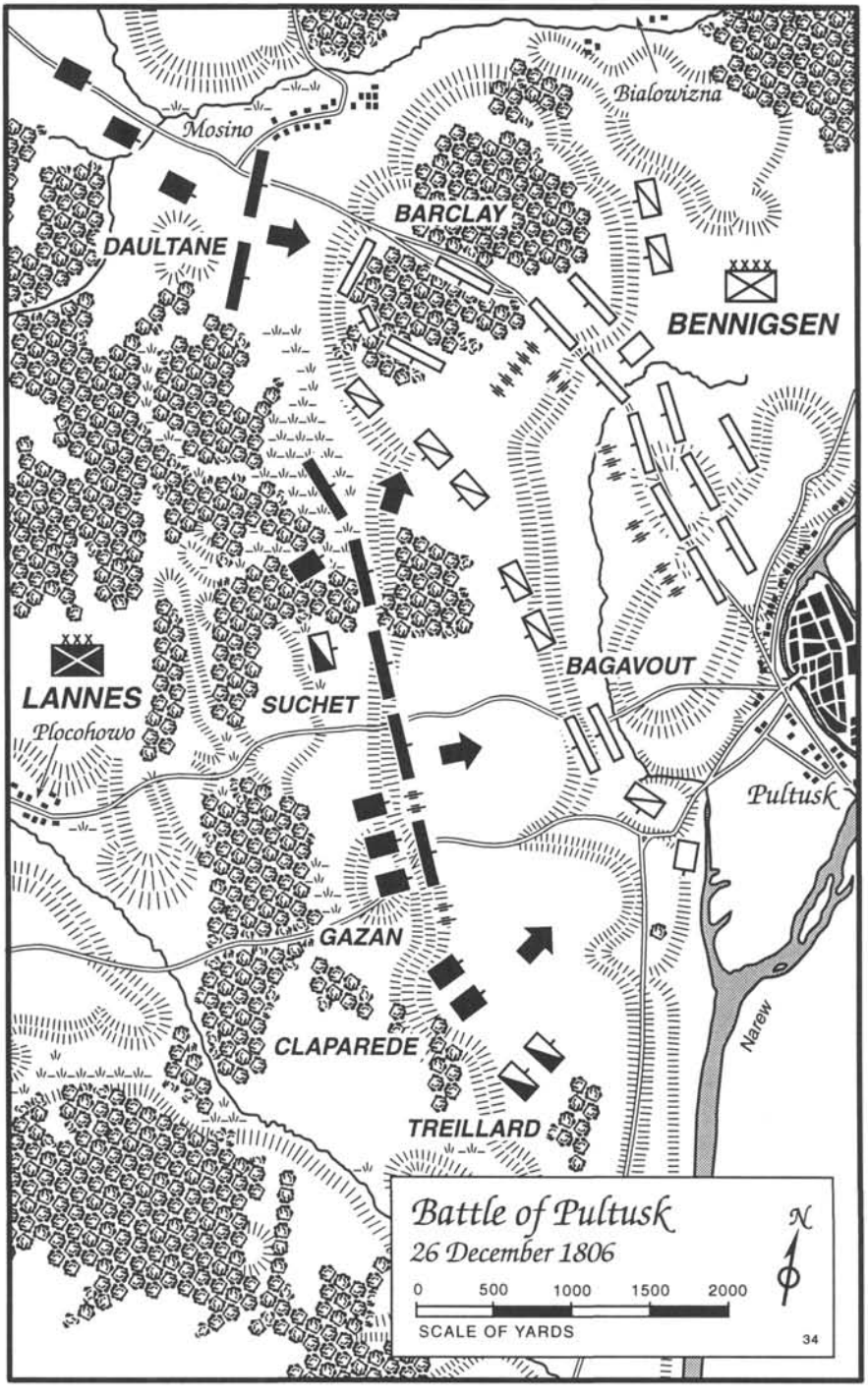
Lannes had less than a week until the Russians made further convalescence impossible. Napoleon thought Bennigsen had just crossed the Narew River near Pultusk to avoid the French concentration, and issued orders on 13 December to pursue him. The village of Pultusk lay along the Narew 35 miles north of Warsaw; for some reason, Bennigsen seemed reluctant to leave it. He was still there two days before Christmas, when Lannes left Warsaw and marched north. The 5th Corps took two days to cover the fifteen miles to Zbroski. The infantry sank to its knees in mud from heavy winter rains, the horses struggled, and supply wagons and artillery caissons stuck fast. Lannes and his troops spent a miserable Christmas night in snow, sleet, and hail, ten miles away from Bennigsen at Pultusk. The next day they closed the distance to five miles, but it took ten hours to do it.[10]

Bennigsen's 45,000 troops dug in around the village, confident they could defeat any forces the French sent against them. The Russian general was probably right; he had the terrain in his favor and superior numbers although the 5th Corps, with less than 20,000 men, was still too far away to worry about. The five-mile march might as well have been twenty—the mud was everywhere, and the infantry slogged though it at the appalling rate of less than one mile an hour.[11]

Bennigsen waited patiently, his forces deployed into three large columns. The left column, commanded by General Karl Fedorovich Bagavout, covered the bridge over the Narew. General Mikhail Barclay de Tolly's column on the right held the woods northwest of Pultusk. Bennigsen kept the majority of his forces in the center, hidden by a steep rise, and protected his line with cavalry. Cossack patrols scouted for the French advance.[12]

During the morning of the 26th, Lannes rode out with his cavalry patrol and found the Russian cavalry and part of Barclay de Tolly's column in the woods. Because his orders were explicit—take Pultusk and its bridge intact—Lannes knew he had to attack; he also knew he would do so without any reinforcements. Although he had no idea how many men Bennigsen really had because the terrain hid most of them from his scouts, he figured the odds must be at least two to one. Odds had never stopped him before, and would not stop him now, but he did not feel particularly optimistic.[13]

He stretched his corps out to cover as much of the visible Russian front as he could. Suchet's division formed the first line, Gazan's the second. Treillard's light cavalry division and a battalion of Claparède's 17th *Légère* charged Bagavout at Pultusk around eleven. The Russians stood firm until General Dominique Vedel's brigade attacked, then abandoned their position less than an hour later under cover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BARCLAY
DAULTANE
BENNIGSEN
BAGAVOUT
LANNES
SUCHET
Plocohowo
Pultusk
GAZAN
CLAPAREDE
TREILLARD
Narew
Battle of Pultusk
26 December 1806
0 500 1000 1500 2000
SCALE OF YARDS
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34

of a heavy snowfall. The cavalry attempted to save their retreating comrades but the snowdrifts slowed them down. After a determined hand-to-hand combat with Vedel, the Russians continued their retreat.[14]

Lannes and Suchet led the attack against Barclay de Tolly in the woods. The Russian column was strong, but Suchet succeeded in temporarily dislodging them. The advantage did not last. Bennigsen had more than 120 guns, whereas the 5th Corps artillery was stuck in the mud between Zbroski and Pultusk. At best, Lannes had four or five guns, no match for the Russian bombardment directed at him. By two in the afternoon swirling snow blanketed everything, the early dusk reduced visibility to almost nothing, and the French were in trouble. Clearly unable to continue the offensive, Lannes wondered if he could save his corps from annihilation. General Joseph-Augustin Daultane from the 3rd Corps and Bennigsen's odd reluctance to capitalize on his obvious advantage rescued him from disaster. Daultane knew the 5th Corps was in Pultusk and, judging from the heavy artillery fire, he thought he had better get there to help out. Arriving shortly after two, he reinforced the battered corps and prevented its destruction. Bennigsen thought Daultane was the first of more reinforcements. Because at least one of his columns and most of his cavalry had been beaten back by an outnumbered but determined French offensive, he decided to abandon Pultusk.[15]

The 5th Corps, too exhausted and reduced by casualties to consider a pursuit through a bitter winter night, collapsed in the dark where it was. Both sides claimed victory, but Pultusk was an inconclusive engagement. Because Bennigsen so conveniently retired—eighteen hours later he was thirty miles north at Ostrolenka—Lannes held Pultusk and its bridge, but he was too tired to care. His men were also too exhausted to take shelter in the village, and they spent another freezing night in the snow. It could have been so much worse, and Lannes knew it. He was also among the casualties; the official bulletin noted he had been hit by yet another musket ball. He did not tell Louise about that, though he admitted he could do with some rest after such a hard-fought engagement.[16]

Nothing improved after Pultusk, not only for the 5th Corps but also for the rest of the army scattered across central Poland. Only Napoleon, politicking in Warsaw, missed snow, thaws, everlasting mud, and rampant disease. Too weary to move, Lannes stayed with his corps at Pultusk until 31 December when Napoleon sent for him. He reached the Polish capital on New Year's Day. If he thought the summons meant a well-deserved rest, he learned otherwise almost immediately. Concerned that General Jean-Henri Essen's corps cantoned between the Narew and the Bug threatened communications between Warsaw and the Grande Armée, Napoleon ordered Lannes to attack Essen at Ostrolenka. Lannes tried to argue, pointing out what he knew from personal experience—the bad roads and harsh weather made military operations virtually impossible. He did not remind Napoleon that he had been sick for weeks and wounded at Pultusk; his condition did not matter as much as saving his hard-used corps from further damage. His chief-of-staff, General Compans, agreed, stating that a new campaign was not a good idea just now. One man in eight was sick, and though rest and food would cure them, neither was available. In spite of that morale seemed good, and the

only complaints concerned food, not the fact they were stashed twenty to thirty in a hut, when such shelter could be found. "They're used to it," Compans explained. The emperor did not care about bad roads, worse weather, and no food—he cared about the enemy. The 5th Corps left Warsaw on 28 January.[17]

Lannes hung on until the 30th, and then literally collapsed on the side of the road to Ostrolenka. Admitting defeat and thinking he was a liability to Napoleon's offensive, he gave his command to Suchet. Bundled in cloaks by his aides, he returned to Warsaw, half-conscious, in the back of a supply wagon. The emperor entrusted the 5th Corps to his aide-de-camp General Jean Savary and changed his orders, telling Savary to contain Essen rather than eliminate him.[18]

In Warsaw, the winter months held several diversions for Napoleon, ranging from a confrontation with the Russians to deciding the future of an independent Poland. The confrontation was a setback; the battle of Eylau, a Pyrrhic victory by any standard, sent French and Russians back to their respective winter quarters to wait for spring. The second diversion offered the eighteen-year-old Countess Maria Walewska as a lovely inducement for a new Poland under French protection.[19]

Lannes missed Eylau and the countess. He spent weeks in a requisitioned Polish palace, dangerously ill, confined to bed and hating it. Usually too tough—and too contrary—to give in to anything less than a straight shot to the head, he admitted he could not bluff his way through typhus. He surrendered with amazingly bad grace to endless doses of quinine and laudanum, the best Doctor Larrey could offer. Quinine was supposed to reduce the fever, although it did not, and laudanum to induce sleep, which it did. Neither remedy had much effect. Because he feared for the marshal's life—or more likely his own sanity if he had to tend his unruly patient much longer—Larrey sent for Lannes's wife. Her skills as a nurse may have been nonexistent, but at least she could keep him quiet. Madame la maréchale arrived the first week of March and stayed two weeks, all the time she evidently could spare away from her children. She left her husband not much better than she found him, but at least she thought he would accept his long recovery with a bit more equanimity.

The problem with a lengthy convalescence, particularly for someone unused to it, was the lack of anything to do. With too much idle time on his hands, confined to bed or at least to his rooms, Lannes had to entertain himself. Unfortunately, he did so by dwelling on every real and imagined unpleasantness since he had left France the previous October. By this time he had at least six months' worth, and blew them out of all proportion. Had he felt better he would have dealt with any major or minor "injustice" with one of his typical short-lived explosions. At a physical and mental low point, he ratcheted his sense of injured Gascon pride up several notches instead. He doubtless practiced on Louise first while she was in Warsaw. Her responses would naturally be simple: come back to hearth and home, enjoy all his lovely money, and tell Napoleon what he could do with his army. This lady did not like the emperor, the source of the money and status her husband shared with her.

Most of Lannes's ill will arose from what he referred to as "the Stettin affair."

Apparently everyone else but him had forgotten about it, but he added it to a growing personal *cahier de doléance*. Back among her children and family, Louise received round two in written form. Lannes had the litany down to a few verses and a chorus: while he was risking his life for the emperor's glory, Napoleon and his cronies, motivated by "infernal politics," were trying to do him in. Only courage sustained him, and the knowledge he had always done his duty with honor. Not enough, apparently, for the "ingrates" who cared about him only when he could do something useful for them. If that was the case, and to him it certainly was, then he just wanted to go home.[20]

Sick people often have fevered fantasies, and this was Lannes's best one to date. Although it is true Berthier had questioned his appropriation of some of the Stettin funds, Napoleon gave it no thought one way or the other. The emperor's only fault in this instance was not taking the time to reassure Lannes in words of one syllable that all was well—he should have known by now that this sort of thing was necessary. However, he had a spring campaign to plan, with no time to spend smoothing ruffled feathers.

When spring finally arrived, Napoleon shifted his headquarters to the castle of Finkenstein, 120 miles northwest of Warsaw and between Danzig and the Russian army concentrated at Königsberg. He made the capture of Danzig one of his priorities. Marshal Lefebvre had commanded the siege operations since the end of February but had made little progress against General Friedrich Kalkreuth's persistent defense. The situation had become critical, because the Russians would likely reinforce Kalkreuth. Impatient with the lack of progress, Napoleon sent Lefebvre some support.[21]

Marshal Masséna, who had been ordered to leave the comforts of Lombardy, now commanded the 5th Corps, mismanaged earlier by Savary at Ostrolenka during Lannes's illness. Determined to give him something to do and equally sure he was up to it, Napoleon created a corps for Lannes and sent it to Marienburg, twenty-eight miles northwest of Finkenstein. The Reserve Corps was composed of Oudinot's grenadier division, Verdier's infantry division, an Italian infantry division, and two light cavalry divisions. General Jean-Baptiste Drouet was Lannes's chief-of-staff.[22]

Hard-pressed at Danzig, Marshal Lefebvre was told the Reserve Corps was on its way. In his impatience, however, he violated the chain of command by contacting Oudinot directly and requesting his assistance as soon as possible. Already irritated with Lefebvre's lack of progress, Napoleon put the elderly marshal in his place. "Oudinot will go wherever he's needed, but it's not for you to decide where that is." Lannes also heard from Berthier on the subject. "Lefebvre doesn't know or understand the operations of the Grande Armée. . . . Besides, your troops aren't under his orders." Lannes probably did not care about Lefebvre's alleged presumption. What mattered to him was the fact that he had actually survived the winter, had a new corps to command, and was going to participate in a new campaign, even if the first part of it involved a tedious siege. He planned to eliminate the tedium as quickly as possible. Alerted by General Aleksandr Kamenskoi's 8,000 troops advancing toward Danzig, Napoleon ordered

Lannes and Oudinot to intercept the Russians. He also insisted that Lannes not allow any of his troops to be diverted for Lefebvre's siege works; his job was to attack and defeat Kamenskoi.[23]

On their way to Finkenstein, the Montesquiou-Fézensac brothers met Lannes and Oudinot as they were leaving for Danzig. The older brother had never seen Lannes, but he had certainly heard about him. "I expected to see a giant," he recalled, "but he was rather short." Small in stature, perhaps, but never lacking in ego, Lannes said, "Tell the emperor not to worry—I'm on my way to Danzig." The marquis remembered that he had a particularly strong Gascon accent, which made it a little tricky to understand him. He also said that "he might have been bragging, but if so, his words were backed up by a lot of accomplishments. I was quite impressed with him."[24]

General Louis-Jacques Coëhorn built a bridge over the Pillau so Lannes and Oudinot's grenadiers could attack the Russians outside Danzig. In spite of numerically superior enemy forces, the French drove Kamenskoi off with 2,000 casualties. Kalkreuth attempted a last-ditch sortie outside the city on 20 May but retreated with heavy losses. Knowing he would get no more reinforcements, Kalkreuth surrendered the next day; his garrison swore it would not fight again for a year. Danzig also yielded nearly 800 guns, with ammunition, caissons, and other plentiful supplies. Lefebvre marched through Danzig at the head of his troops; Napoleon told Lannes and Oudinot, the real victors, to let him do so. Happy to escape the victory parade, they returned to the Reserve Corps headquarters at Marienburg a little the worse for wear. Oudinot was still shaken from a ricocheting ball that killed his horse beneath him, bounced off Lannes, then fell harmlessly in the dirt. Both thought they had been fairly lucky.[25]

Lannes discovered that spring did not necessarily mean an increase in rations, nor did any of the supplies from Danzig reach the Reserve Corps. He sent Oudinot on foraging expeditions, telling him to make sure officers accompanied the men, "otherwise they'll get into fights with the cuirassiers cantoned in the same area." He knew what he was talking about, remembering altercations with Murat's cavalry the previous fall. While the grenadiers beat the bushes—but not the cuirassiers—around Marienburg, Lannes dealt with the army's bureaucracy in short order. Possibly motivated by his language, the commissariats sent provisions within days.[26]

The Reserve Corps received orders to leave at two in the morning on 5 June. Lannes missed the deadline and did not apologize for it. "I didn't get your order until three this morning, too late to move out, obviously," he wrote Berthier. "You also said take ten days' worth of provisions, but because we've been on quarter-rations for days, I don't see where you think they're coming from. . . . By the way, I don't have a single wagon or carriage—the cavalry took them all." He left Marienburg on the 6th, followed by promises of artillery, wagons, and supplies. He did not count on any of it.[27]

Napoleon left Warsaw and went north, followed by the Imperial Guard. He crossed paths with the Reserve Corps and its commander, who was still in a surly mood. Lannes took advantage of the encounter and made sure the emperor heard

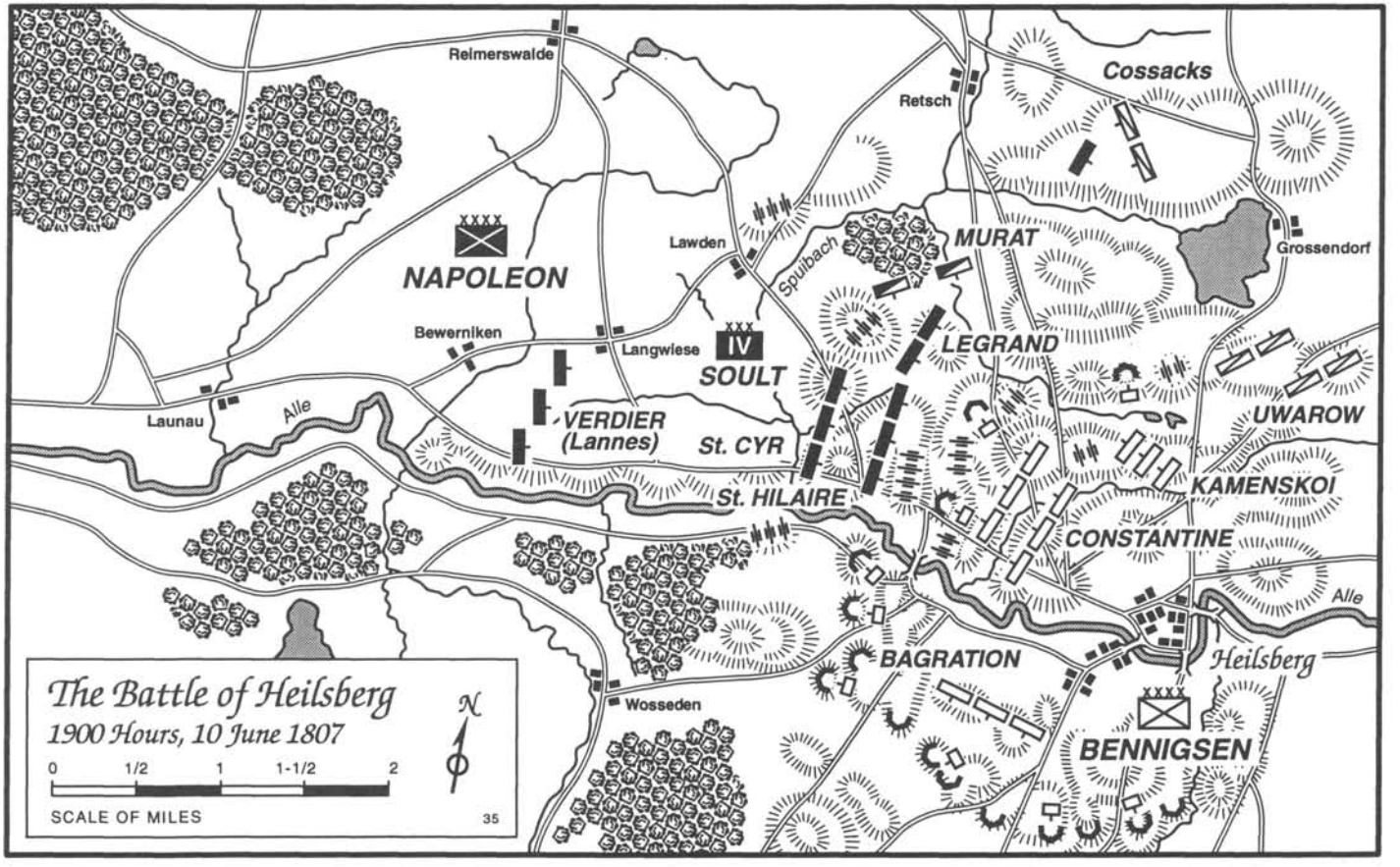
each of his grievances, much as Louise had. "The last campaign damn near killed me," he said, "and here we go again. My troops are marching on empty stomachs, my generals have complained about it, I can't get past the commissariats without a pitched battle, and I'm always short of artillery. Far as I can tell, the blood of a single French soldier—including mine—is worth more than all of Poland." Napoleon listened without interruption, and then told his irate subordinate, "Well, go home if you're so unhappy." This logical reply caught Lannes off guard; it was not what he expected, though he had said just that often enough to his wife. "I can't do that—you need me here," he said, and he was right—the emperor *did* need him, though he might have wished Lannes would be a little less contentious. Captain Jean-Roch Coignet of the Imperial Guard overheard this conversation and later recalled that "it was only this great soldier who could speak so familiarly to the emperor," not only in terms of his persistent habit of *tutoyer*ing him but also while presenting unvarnished opinions and blunt observations.[28]

Bennigsen had spent most of May constructing a camp at Heilsberg on the Alle River to protect his communications with Königsberg. By the first week of June, he held it with minimum troops. However, when Ney's 6th Corps moved to Guttstadt, eight miles down river, followed by Lannes's Reserve Corps, he began moving the rest of his forces to Heilsberg, convinced the whole Grande Armée was advancing toward him. "Bennigsen has been withdrawing to Heilsberg—we ran into him yesterday evening," Lannes reported. "We took quite a few prisoners, [and] the rest of his forces seem to be in considerable disorder."[29]

If Bennigsen intended to make a stand at Heilsberg, Napoleon had to counter him with equal force, and ordered Murat's cavalry, Lannes, Soult, and Ney to Heilsberg immediately, with Davout and Mortier advancing to outflank the Russian right. He knew Bennigsen would have the initial advantage because Heilsberg was his camp, it was well fortified, and the geography favored a defensive position.[30]

Murat's cavalry reached the enemy first on the morning of 10 June, and forced Bagration's cavalry back to Heilsberg. His success was short-lived; Russian artillery pinned him down and prevented any advances. Soult's infantry divisions and artillery reserve arrived at three, but they could not move forward either. Until reinforcements arrived, Murat and Soult exchanged fire with the Russians and tried to hold their positions. With twilight approaching, Murat thought some effort was better than none and ordered Soult's infantry to charge two Russian redoubts. The artillery easily repulsed the attack, while the enemy cavalry galloped out from Heilsberg and pushed Murat back.[31]

Napoleon arrived at nightfall as the French steadily retreated from the equally steady Russian pressure. The emperor decided not to risk another attack, but forgot to tell Lannes. The marshal knew the day had not been a success, perhaps because he had not been there from the beginning. He also knew that neither Murat nor Soult had been able to dislodge the Russians. Finally, he thought because Napoleon was on the field, probably hoping someone could rescue the situation, he ought to oblige. Carried away by the same impetuosity that often affected Ney, Lannes ordered Verdier's division forward, even though at ten it was


Reimerswalde
Retsch
Cossacks
NAPOLEON
Lawden
Spulbach
MURAT
Grossendorf
Bewerniken
Langwiese
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SOULT
LEGRAND
Launau
Alle
VERDIER
(Lannes)
St. CYR
UWAROW
St. HILAIRE
KAMENSKOI
CONSTANTINE
Alle
BAGRATION
Heilsberg
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BENNIGSEN
The Battle of Heilsberg
1900 Hours, 10 June 1807
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SCALE OF MILES
35

growing dark. The Russians responded as they had all day—their artillery threw Verdier back in disorder and with heavy losses. By midnight, all firing had stopped.[32]

Bennigsen held onto Heilsberg and his communications with Königsberg. The Grande Armée—or at least part of it—had failed to achieve Napoleon's objective, and several commanders were quick to lay blame for the failure. In the predawn hours, Napoleon listened to his subordinates who seemed to know just who was at fault. Savary, who had led the Imperial Guard grenadiers and fusiliers, castigated Murat for ordering Soult's ill-conceived attack at bayonet-point against entrenched Russian redoubts. "It would be a lot better if [Murat] had less courage and more common sense," he said. Napoleon told Savary to be quiet.[33]

Lannes had a lot to say as well, but most of it was obviously unprintable, because in his memoirs Savary glossed over what the Gascon marshal said about Murat. At least "plumed cock" got into print, courtesy of another less-embarrassed witness. Napoleon did not tell Lannes to be quiet, because nothing less than the full weight of his displeasure could shut him up once he got started. In any case, Lannes had no right to criticize anyone; sending Verdier's division against the Russian redoubt was stupid. However, he was a master of creative writing in his official report: "Verdier's division managed to reach the [Russian] redoubt; only nightfall ended the fighting." In this instance, the Russian guns ended the fighting rather than providential dusk.[34]

Bennigsen spent the night at Heilsberg, but the safety of Königsberg concerned him more than continuing a battle he probably could have won the next morning. He was gone by midday on the 11th, leaving instructions to Kamenskoi to join Lestocq's Prussians at Bartenstein, then march to Königsberg. Napoleon understood the importance of Königsberg as well as Bennigsen. The only way to reach it was along a road running northeast through Friedland, and the emperor never intended to let the Russians advance past that point. He sent Murat and Soult toward Königsberg, with Davout on their right, and ordered Lannes to Friedland to capture the Alle bridge so Bennigsen could not retreat farther east. Because Lannes had to stop the Russians from crossing the Alle, he needed more than the Reserve Corps advance-guard to do it. Napoleon promised to send reinforcements, particularly General Emmanuel Grouchy's dragoons and Mortier's cavalry. If the situation warranted, he would also send Ney's corps. Napoleon told Lannes to use his cavalry for reconnaissance and send him detailed reports every two hours; he wanted to know, minute by minute, where the enemy was and what it was doing.[35]

As Lannes occupied Domnau and sent patrols toward Friedland, Bennigsen countered with a large cavalry detachment led by Prince Andrei Gallitzin and supported by artillery. Gallitzin scattered one of Lannes's cavalry patrols and expelled the 9th Hussar regiment from Friedland. When the rest of the Russian cavalry arrived, they formed a long line from Heinrichsdorf to the north down to the Sortlack forest. Gallitzin's attack had been a surprise, particularly because Lannes had just written Napoleon that there was no one at Domnau but two cavalry regiments and a few baggage escorts. He had already sent two of

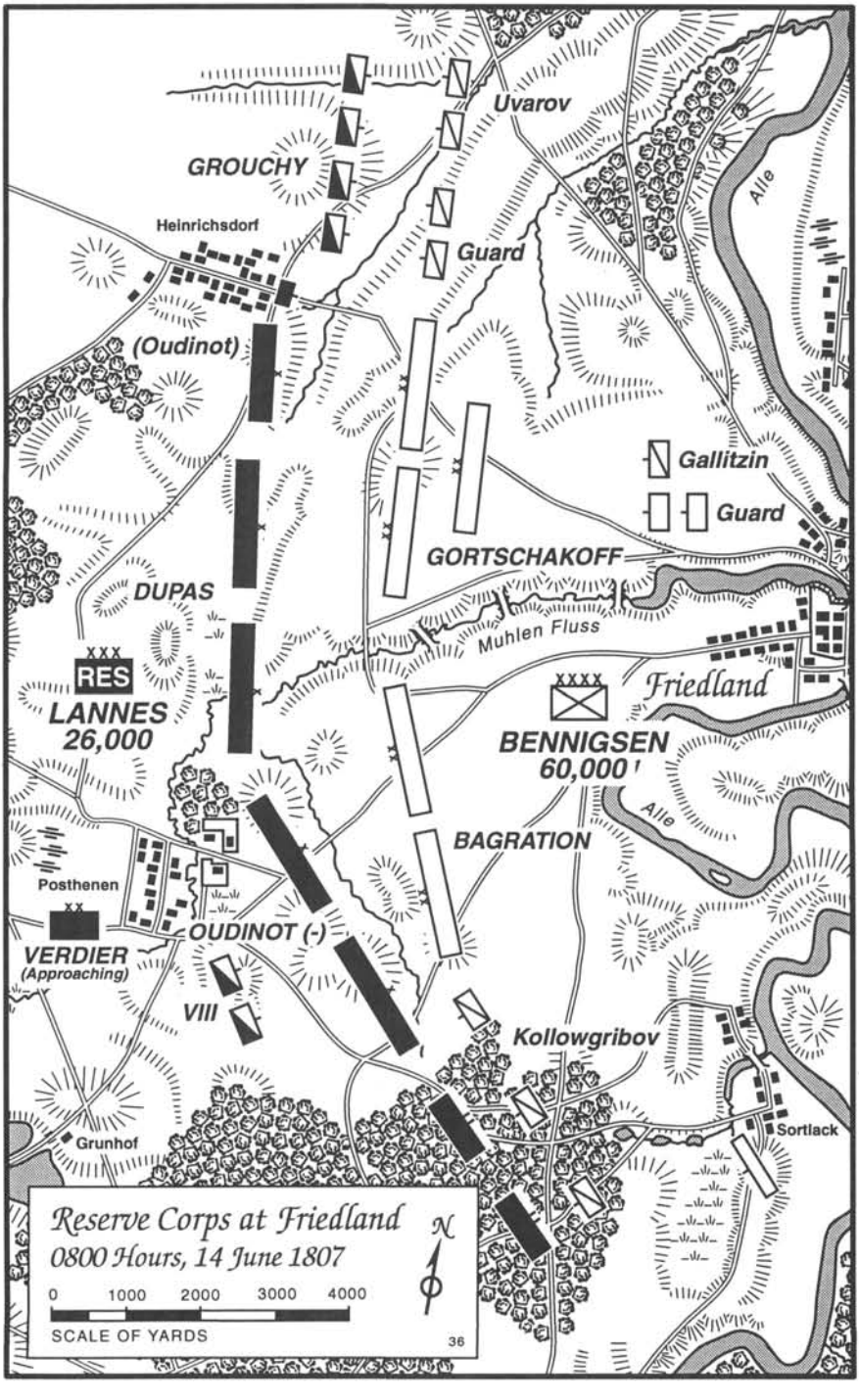
Oudinot's brigades to Friedland and planned to join him with the rest of his corps if they ran into any serious resistance.[36]

Bennigsen reached Friedland at 8:00 in the evening on 13 June. He learned from Gallitzin's prisoners that a corps of 16,000 troops had occupied Posthenen, and could not resist attacking such a small force. He thought his superior numbers would be "eminently favorable to Russian bravery." Confident of a quick victory, Bennigsen ordered all his forces to Friedland before dawn on the 14th, directing them through the town, across the Alle bridge, and onto the plain. Though he had used the terrain to his advantage at Heilsberg, in his haste to attack Lannes, Bennigsen overlooked the obvious disadvantages at Friedland. He forgot the town was accessible only by a single road running through Posthenen, occupied at the moment by Oudinot's grenadiers. He also did not notice—or chose to ignore the fact—that natural obstacles such as the Sortlack forest and the marshy Mühlenfluß, a tributary of the Alle, limited other approaches. Finally, he sent his troops west from Friedland across the narrow bridge over the Alle, a natural bottleneck if ever there was one.[37]

In spite of his optimism, Bennigsen began crossing the river and deploying his forces on the western bank with amazing precision—and slowness. It would take him more than eight hours to get 65,000 men across the Alle and into the carefully aligned formations he had planned. Bagration's four divisions held the area south of the Mühlenfluß to the Sortlack forest. General Alexei Gorchakov's three divisions formed the right wing north of the Mühlenfluß to the village of Heinrichsdorf. Two large corps supported by cavalry formed the center and reserve. "Expressing the greatest confidence in victory," Bennigsen discounted the fact that his entire force had its back to the Alle, the Mühlenfluß marsh between his flanks, and a bridge and small town in the way of retreat, if worst came to the worst. Evidently the idea of disaster never crossed his mind.[38]

Woefully outnumbered, Lannes knew he was dangerously exposed and likely to remain so for hours. The only advantage he had—and it was a slim one at best—was the terrain. He placed his infantry behind every tree, scrub brush, ridge, and clump of uncut wheat he could find to hide their movements from the enemy and conceal how few men he had. They constantly shifted behind these natural screens, from right to left and back again, repelling attacks whenever they came, keeping up an unending fire and using the smoke as additional concealment. Vulnerable to enemy assaults all along his thinly stretched line, Lannes knew he had to hold the ridge, lure the Russians across the river but keep them away from him, and give Napoleon enough time to arrive with the rest of the army and defeat Bennigsen. He did *not* know he would be on his own, a tempting bait offered up to a very big fish, for eleven grueling hours. It would not have mattered—he had been ordered to fight, and fight he would.[39]

The rest of the Reserve Corps hurried from Domnau and reached Posthenen after midnight. Lannes ordered Oudinot's grenadiers to take the village, which they did with relative ease. Grouchy was already on the road, sending messages ahead that he expected to arrive about three. Mortier thought he could reach Friedland by then, but said he had sent his cavalry for immediate support.


Uvarov
GROUCHY
Heinrichsdorf
Guard
Alle
(Oudinot)
Gallitzin
Guard
GORTSCHAKOFF
DUPAS
Muhlen Fluss
RES
LANNES
26,000
Friedland
BENNIGSEN
60,000
Alle
BAGRATION
Posthenen
OUDINOT (-)
VERDIER
(Approaching)
VIII
Kollowgribov
Grunhof
Sortlack
Reserve Corps at Friedland
0800 Hours, 14 June 1807
0 1000 2000 3000 4000
SCALE OF YARDS
36

Verdier's infantry division, still smarting from its rough treatment at Heilsberg, was far to the rear and not expected before dawn. By three when it was light enough to see in these northern latitudes, Lannes had slightly less than 10,000 troops in position. He also saw that Bennigsen had already sent three times that number across the Alle, with thousands more to come.[40]

The artillery opened fire on Russian targets still too far away, but Lannes used the bombardment and its smoke as deterrent and concealment. He had only two horse guns but told the teams to make them look like twenty. Oudinot's grenadiers held the Sortlack forest, the light cavalry ready to assist them or march wherever they were needed. Grouchy's dragoons waited in reserve until the Russians advanced.

Bennigsen directed his first attack toward Sortlack, sending the Russian Imperial Guard infantry and a few cavalry squadrons to take it from Oudinot. The grenadiers dug in and refused to budge as the Saxon light cavalry charged time and again until the Russians retired. The defense of Sortlack was so determined and clever that the enemy never knew such a small force had stopped it. More French cavalry was on the way; Nansouty's cuirassiers arrived at the hamlet of Georgenau shortly after four, prodded by frantic messages from one of Lannes's aides.[41]

With Sortlack holding for the moment, Heinrichsdorf was the next crucial position. Russian infantry advanced on the village between four and five in the morning, dragging seven guns with them. Lannes knew if the Russians captured Heinrichsdorf they would cut his lines of retreat and communication. Grouchy's dragoons galloped off to protect the village and Lannes ordered one of Oudinot's grenadier brigades to race up from Sortlack in support. They managed to hold on to Heinrichsdorf, but the Russians, momentarily repulsed, regrouped for a counterattack. They might have succeeded, but Nansouty's cuirassiers rode and threw the Russians back in confusion. By seven, Sortlack and Heinrichsdorf were in French hands, but Lannes's line was still stretched dangerously thin over a four-mile front. He had only 16,000 troops with him—worn out by maneuvering as much as from fighting the enemy—while he watched more and more Russians stream across the Alle onto the plain.[42]

As the sun grew increasingly bright, the desperate need for deception played an even larger role. Lannes ordered constant skirmisher fire, supported by artillery, and small mobile columns of both infantry and cavalry to run from one point of concealment to the next, always firing, always threatening. Disconcerted by a sudden downpour and continual firing from an enemy he could not see or estimate clearly, Bennigsen slowed his crossing of the Alle, but by then he had more than 60,000 troops on the plain. Lannes had also received reinforcements; General Pierre-Louis Dupas's infantry division from Mortier's corps finally arrived and spread out between Posthenen and Heinrichsdorf, where the line was weakest. The odds had dropped to three-to-one.[43]

Ever since three that morning, Lannes and Oudinot had been sending their aides to Napoleon's headquarters at Eylau with reports and pleas for reinforcements. By seven the pleas became more desperate. Napoleon seemed

more interested in knowing if the Reserve Corps faced Bennigsen's army, rather than just his advance-guard, and insisted on more precise information. "Ride your horse into the ground if you have to," Lannes to his aide Saint-Mats, "but tell the emperor we're fighting the *entire* Russian army!" Equally impatient and not to be outdone in the matter of short, sarcastic messages, Oudinot dispatched one of his aides half an hour later: "Even *my* little eyes can see it's the whole Russian army!"[44]

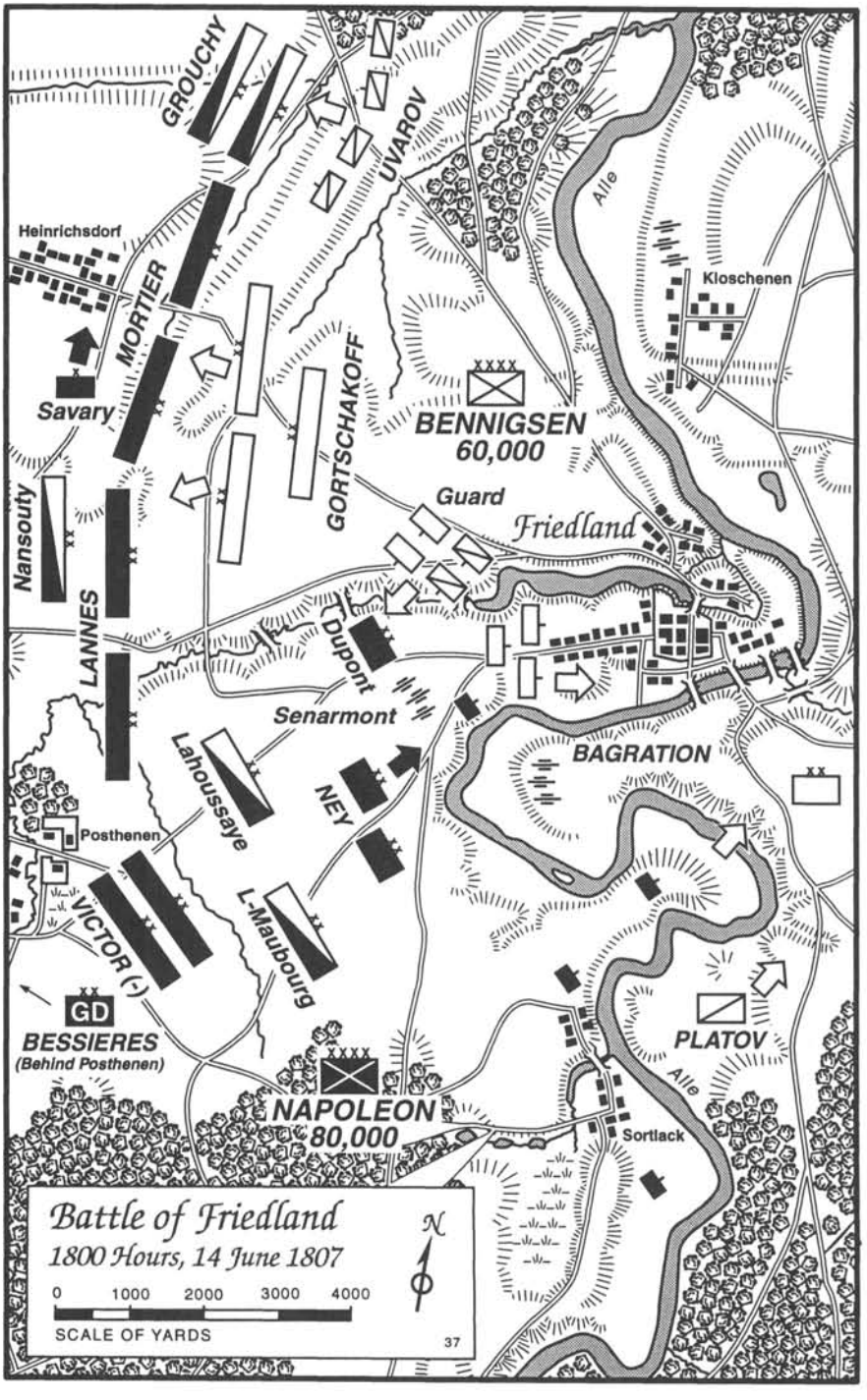
Bennigsen launched a full-scale attack, sending General Fyodor Uvarov's sixty cavalry squadrons against Heinrichsdorf. Grouchy saw the enormous Russian mass bearing down on him and knew he could not stand against it. Conferring on the run with Nansouty, he raced away with the Russians on his heels—if nothing else, Grouchy hoped they would wear themselves out chasing him. Uvarov galloped after the French dragoons, and when his men were hot, their horses winded, Nansouty's cuirassiers popped out of concealment and attacked them in the flank. Grouchy wheeled around and attacked, forcing Uvarov back to the Alle. For the next two hours, French and Russian cavalry traded more than fifteen charges and countercharges until Uvarov gave up and rode off the field.[45]

At the same time he sent his cavalry against Heinrichsdorf, Bennigsen ordered two infantry divisions to take the Sortlack forest. Most of Oudinot's grenadiers still held the woods, supported by the Saxon cavalry and the tough 9th Hussar regiment, who had been engaged with the enemy on and on since the previous evening. Numerically the French were no match for the Russians, and the forest changed hands at least four times. The Russians withdrew shortly before noon, worn down by an amazing defense, and left Sortlack to the French.[46]

Verdier's infantry division also arrived before noon after a difficult march, but it had no time to rest. Lannes split the infantry into several of the mobile columns he had been using so effectively for hours and sent each one to the weakest points in his line—there were entirely too many of those, he thought. Bennigsen launched an assault against these reinforcements, with no success. By noon he had failed to take either at Sortlack or Heinrichsdorf. "Every time and everywhere we answered the [enemy's] charges with artillery and musket fire, sometimes with just our bayonets when that's we had," Lannes reported when he had a spare moment.[47]

Napoleon arrived at Friedland shortly after noon, the rest of the Grande Armée less than two hours behind him. Finally convinced of the enemy army's existence, he planned a coordinated attack, giving Ney's 6th Corps the honor of delivering the coup de grace, according to Napoleon's rhetoric. Lannes's dog-tired Reserve Corps formed the center, with Grouchy's winded cavalry and Mortier's troops, who were not in much better shape. General Armand-Lebrun LaHoussaye's fresh dragoons supported Lannes in the center, while the Reserve Corps' splendid Saxon cavalry waited in reserve, just long enough to catch its breath.

Napoleon began his attack around five-thirty. According to the official bulletin, Ney led it "with the *sang-froid* and intrepidity characteristic of him, personally directing the smallest details and setting an example to his corps which


GROUCHY
UVAROV
Heinrichsdorf
MORTIER
Savary
GORTSCHAKOFF
BENNIGSEN
60,000
Guard
Friedland
Kloschenen
Alle
Nansouty
LANNES
Dupont
Senarmont
BAGRATION
Lahoussaye
NEY
Posthenen
VICTOR (-)
L-Maubourg
GD
BESSIERES
(Behind Posthenen)
NAPOLEON
80,000
PLATOV
Alle
Sortlack
Battle of Friedland
1800 Hours, 14 June 1807
0 1000 2000 3000 4000
SCALE OF YARDS
N
37

always distinguished itself." Lannes and his comrades who had been fighting with skill, determination, and frequent desperation for more than eleven hours to guarantee Napoleon would have an enemy army to defeat when he arrived, had to wonder at the emperor's shortsightedness. The resentment would flare up later, after the victory was assured.[48]

Bennigsen began to withdraw from the plain, but Napoleon moved to pin him down between the Mühlenfluß and the Alle and destroy him. Realizing he faced the Grande Armée, Bennigsen deployed to meet the attack. It was a case of too little, too late. The French cavalry, infantry, and artillery forced the Russians to retreat into the narrow, twisting streets of Friedland and across the Alle bridge, a bottleneck from which they could not escape. Caught inside the town, Bennigsen sent Gorchakov's infantry divisions against Lannes, Grouchy, and Mortier but, in spite of his superior numbers, he failed to stop them. Stranded north of the Mühlenfluß by the steady French pressure, Gorchakov became an easy target for their artillery.[49]

Lannes's troops advanced into Friedland, which was blazing from encounters with Ney's corps and artillery fire and, dodging burning houses and falling timbers, they raced after the fleeing enemy. By midnight confusion was obvious among victors and vanquished. Neither could see the other in the dark, though they kept up a steady fire and hoped to hit the right targets, and by midnight Lannes also launched his last charge—it was actually led by his senior aide because he could hardly stay on his horse—but the last Russians escaped across the Alle further north.[50]

His hesitancy and failure to recognize the tactical disadvantages of the terrain had defeated Bennigsen. He had also been fooled for hours by an unusually talented advance-guard commander not above employing a few tricks in addition to his initiative and skill in capitalizing on the enemy's mistakes. After such a significant victory, nothing remained but terms for a conclusive peace treaty. Alexander I was forced to deal with Napoleon now that his army had lost once again. Frederick William III of Prussia, spared so far from a formal, unprofitable settlement because the French had been too busy running his army into the ground, would now learn the emperor's terms for Prussia. While Napoleon worked out the details, the army rested and congratulated itself on the victory while waiting for the usual praises and rewards.

Lannes did not wait; he praised his troops whom he rightly claimed had saved the day for the rest of the army. He neglected none of his generals and staff officers, citing their valor and the wounds many of them had received during the course of a very long and exhausting day. He was especially pleased with his Saxon light cavalry regiments and personally commended them to their monarch. Apart from his extravagant and misplaced praise of Ney, Napoleon singled out Mortier for his heroics late on the 14th, though he never mentioned his earlier contributions, when they had really counted. Finally, he indulged in a bit of blanket praise, noting that "everyone distinguished himself." The Reserve Corps had to be content with Napoleon's noncommittal description of its "different movements and different actions taking place [during the early hours of 14 June]."

Different they assuredly *had* been, and critical.[51]

Lannes was simply too exhausted to burst into one of his monumental tirades over bad press. He and Oudinot, equally neglected, received their orders to take their troops to Königsberg without comment, and packed up. Neither would participate in the gaudy diplomatic festivities at Tilsit. Just so no one could say that Lannes had acted uncharacteristically once a campaign ended, he fired a parting shot as soon as he had the strength to do so. When he heard that Napoleon selected Bessières as his honor escort at Tilsit, Lannes recycled some of the nasty comments he usually reserved for Murat and wondered what Bessières had done to deserve such recognition. "He wasn't even *near* the battlefield, not when it really counted," he told interested bystanders. "And later, when everybody else showed up, there he was with the Guard cavalry, well out of range. Hell, he didn't even get his uniform dusty!" Whatever his military shortcomings, at least Bessières could be counted on to mind his manners. Napoleon knew he would be decorative—and quiet. Lannes would have been neither.

The emperor dangled another kind of carrot in front of the marshal, however, evidently enough to heal all wounds, for the time being. "When I saw him today he said he's show me how much he thought of me—you know how much I care about him," Lannes wrote to Louise, who knew nothing of the sort if she bothered to reread her husband's earlier letters. On 30 June, about the time Lannes, Masséna, and Ney were riding to Paris for a well-earned vacation, Napoleon commandeered bits and pieces of Polish territory and distributed them, along with their estimated revenues, to deserving individuals. Lannes got the principality of Siewiercz in the province of Kalisch, with an estimated annual revenue of two-and-a-half million francs. Two million francs was a nice sum, even if they came from a country for which he had a decidedly low opinion.[52]

Lannes did not bother to apply for the letters patent allowing him to tack *Prince de Siévres*—the closest anybody could come to the unpronounceable *Siewiercz*—on to his name, nor did he ever use the title. After his death, however, his wife became unduly interested in the title, doubtless thinking she had somehow earned the right to be called *la princesse*. She also wanted control of the revenues. Napoleon refused her demands, made in almost indecent haste, and told her he saw no reason for her to flaunt the title. Not interested either in Napoleon's plans for this "imperial fief" and his intended role as glorified border lord, Lannes never returned to Poland. However, he made sure he got the financial windfall as promised, and, when it was slow to arrive, he sent a terse note to the governor of Siewiercz. "Seems odd to me that you haven't complied with the emperor's orders," he wrote. "I'd prefer not to use force to take what has been given to me."[53]

In September 1807, Napoleon appointed Lannes *Colonel-général des Suisses*. It sounded impressive, but the title was only honorary. At most Lannes could add a new uniform to his wardrobe and a few Swiss aides to his staff. The emperor also issued instructions to Berthier regarding cash grants and how the recipients should spend them. He thought the owners of newly conferred "great estates" should have suitable residences in Paris and expected them to spend whatever

leisure time he gave them in the capital, perhaps so he could keep and eye on them. Though the marshals could choose their properties, Napoleon would determine if the residence were in an appropriate part of town and suitably large enough for a member of the military aristocracy.[54]

Lannes already had his country estate, the Château de Maisons in Saint-Germaine-en-Laye, and he spent a fortune making it a showplace of conspicuous consumption, an odd pastime from someone who did not seem to care much where he kicked off his boots. He did not think much of its previous visitors, either. At one time or the other, his country estate had hosted no less than three Bourbon monarchs. "Goddamn royals!" was his opinion on that subject. Prepared now to enjoy vegetating in the upscale country, he spent his leisure time implementing some rather novel ideas on landscaping. Ordering most of the older chestnut trees in the parks cut down, he replaced them with poplars in patterns random to the uninitiated but that duplicated the formations of his regiments at Montebello. One of the gardens contained a huge Légion d'honneur star in its center, with all pathways laid out in military precision and named after his army friends. He turned the farmland over to a growing flock of prize Merino sheep he had first seen in Portugal. For some bizarre reason he had taken a fancy to these elegant, soft-fleeced animals and, as far as he knew, no one made any jokes about it. Anticipating Napoleon's decree for ostentatious town houses, Lannes had already bought the Hôtel de Rohan-Chabot, property of an Ancien régime ducal family who had emigrated during the Revolution. This splendid house, occupying half a block on the rue de Varenne in the fashionable Saint-Germaine district, had cost the marshal a mere 300,000 francs. However, he spent another small fortune on interior decoration, furniture—most of it stylishly uncomfortable—and stocking the wine cellars with the proper vintages. His wife drew the line at Armagnac, claiming it was too uncouth to drink and made her husband entirely too rowdy. He managed to sneak in a few bottles anyway; in a house that size concealment was no problem.[55]

Impressive residences and the requisite conspicuous consumption deserved equally impressive titles. The Senatus Consultum of 14 May 1808 laid the foundation for a system of titles and imperial *dotations*. To provide further financial windfall to supplement the incomes of the new nobles, various French allies and satellite states "donated" revenues for their greater glory. Napoleon tried to decide which marshal would receive which title, and covered sheets of paper with his scribblings. He chose some of the obvious pairings—Ney and Elchingen, Davout and Auerstädt, Masséna and Rivoli—at once, but others presented a problem for the imperial imagination. He originally intended to give Lannes the duchy of Vicenza, and had the letters patent drawn up but never signed them. Perhaps he remembered Montebello and thought Lannes should have a title reflecting his military personality. Armand de Caulaincourt, much less military, got Vicenza. Lannes also received an outright monetary grant of one million francs, courtesy of his rank as one of the *Grands officiers de l'Empire*, and annual revenues from additional domains in Poland, Westphalia, and Hanover totaling some 300,000 francs.[56]

Inundated with titles, money, and more idle time than he had seen in years, Lannes made the most of it. He was not a sedentary person, however, and after a year of dividing his time between town and country, he thought he needed a change. Leaving wife and children at Maisons, he took two of his aides and rode off to Lectoure. Alerted by the typical provincial grapevine, town officials prepared the usual welcome for the returning hero whom one must now address as *Monsieur le duc*—lights everywhere, large crowds, bonfires, speeches. The next day, 22 June, featured more of the same as Lannes reviewed the local national guard, then threw a huge party that evening at his house for everyone he knew, which included just about everybody within a twenty-mile radius.

After about three weeks of homespun fun, Lannes received a note from Murat, enjoying himself at Barèges, an elegant spa near the Pyrenees. "It might do you some good to visit," Murat suggested. Lannes joined him, his aides tagging along, though he did not necessarily think water loaded with minerals would be any better than his daily doses of Armagnac. Still, the trip provided an interesting change, and the two on-again, off-again friends spent a few relaxing days swapping exaggerated army stories and trashing the reputations of various colleagues. When the spa's novelty wore off and they decided they had enough of "restorative waters," they rode to Auch and then to the former abbey of Bouillas, one of Lannes's properties buried in the country outside Lectoure. No one "official" knew they were there. In the absence of planned fêtes and boring public receptions, they concocted their own ideas of fun, doubtless with the assistance of a few discreet local ladies.[57]

Meanwhile, Napoleon felt a need to reaffirm his alliance with Alexander, perhaps to have one less thing to worry about because he was already embroiled in the Peninsula. He decided to meet in the Saxon city of Erfurt in late September and early October, staging a diplomatic, cultural, and military extravaganza to impress Alexander and other monarchs and princes summoned to attend. Oudinot had been appointed governor of Erfurt, with orders to make the city acceptable to dignitaries and choose appropriate cultural and social events. Napoleon also selected an envoy to welcome Alexander, escort him to Erfurt, and serve as official tour guide until he arrived. Perhaps to redress his neglect at Tilsit, Napoleon chose Lannes for the job. The choice may have seemed a distinctly odd one to most people who thought they knew Napoleon—how could he send the most outspoken, unpolished, and impolite of all his marshals to escort one of Europe's most powerful absolute monarchs, the veritable embodiment of Ancien régime arrogance and privilege? Napoleon knew what he was doing, however—he understood quite well that Lannes would not be awed by autocratic splendor nor swayed by an overdose of courtly language. Further, his loyalty, rough-edged though it might be, was better insurance that the wily ways of professional courtiers.

Lannes packed his best uniforms—he understood the emphasis in Erfurt would be on *gaudy*—and set off. He reached Friedberg on 21 September. Alexander and the French ambassador to Saint Petersburg, Armand de Caulaincourt, arrived the next evening. "He's had nothing but good things to say

about you," Lannes wrote to Napoleon while the czar was resting from his journey. "He said he'd show his affection for you at every opportunity." Apparently eager to demonstrate this affection as soon as possible, Alexander decided to leave Friedberg at one in the morning to hasten his journey to Erfurt. Bleary-eyed, Lannes and the rest of the imperial escort followed him to Custrin. Alexander evidently did not suffer from fatigue; instead of resting, he reviewed a cuirassier division, praised its splendid uniforms, and said he wanted to reach Weimar by the 25th. At the rate he was traveling, Lannes expected him to make it with time to spare.[58]

When they reached Weimar, one of Napoleon's Polish aides, Désiré Chlapowski, met them with the message that the emperor would receive the czar on 27 September. The progress from Weimar to Erfurt was as glittering as Napoleon could have wished: the military escort surrounded the imperial carriage, plumes bobbing, sunlight flashing off sabers and decorations, horses as splendid as their riders. Alexander ignored the display—he had certainly seen this kind of thing before—and instead insisted that Lannes leave his horse and ride the rest of the way with him. The incongruous traveling companions—an autocrat whose family had ruled a very large country for more than 200 years and a *very* nouveau military aristocrat whose ancestors grew grapes on twenty acres—charmed each other. It is more probable that the czar, used to charm, exhibited it more freely than Lannes who, while he refrained from his usual speech peppered with profanity, was sufficiently unimpressed with his circumstances that he dozed off. Evidently traveling day and night and the weight of his unfamiliar responsibilities had worn him out. Rather than jabbing him in the ribs with his elbow, Alexander kept late summer flies off his face with his handkerchief.[59]

Alexander later expressed his approval of his drowsy escort by awarding Lannes the order of Saint-Andrei before the conference ended. He awarded just eight of these prizes; Berthier was the only other marshal so honored. Lannes accepted, but only after Napoleon told him he could. "You earned [this honor] on the fields of Friedland and Pultusk," the emperor replied. "The esteem of one of our former enemies, who is now our closest ally, honors you and pleases me." Had he received similar decorations from every enemy he had defeated in the last fifteen years, Lannes could not have worn them all at the same time.[60]

Monarchs, princes, and diplomats mingled with artists, philosophers, and writers. Among the latter were Goethe and Christoph Martin Wieland, courted assiduously by the French. Goethe entertained dignitaries in Napoleon's entourage, hosting several breakfasts and dinners. Lannes was almost a perennial guest because, as Goethe noted in his diary, "We had known each other since 1806." He also invited the marshal to dinner and afterwards to see Corneille's *Oedipus*.[61]

In the midst of all the spectacles and entertainment, whatever occurred on the diplomatic front at Erfurt, either openly or in secret, happened without Lannes's involvement. His mission had been simple: escort Alexander, entertain him until Napoleon arrived, and attend whatever social and cultural functions the emperor selected. He was rather impressed with it all, in spite of his usual inclinations.

"These two emperors are the best friends in the world—everything's going really well," he wrote to Louise. He saw in Erfurt only what he expected to see, and wasted no time speculating about hidden agendas. Perhaps he should have.[62]

Caulaincourt, who had become the clever Talleyrand's accomplice, later distorted Lannes's actions, perhaps too naïve—or stupid—to realize how close to treason his participation was. For all his childlike tendencies, Alexander affirmed his affection for the emperor while he smoothly avoided any commitment to Napoleon's plans. Surreptitiously warned by Talleyrand that the emperor's ambition was getting out of bounds and would harm him if he agreed to these plans, the czar remained friendly but noncommittal.

Napoleon knew that something or someone was undermining his hoped-for success at Erfurt, but he did not know until four years later who he should blame. During the long retreat from Moscow, when Napoleon talked about the abortive conference to pass the time, Caulaincourt, still afraid his own duplicity might be discovered, suggested that Lannes had told Alexander to thwart the emperor's plans. After all, did he not receive the Order of Saint Andrei for "services rendered"? Caulaincourt wrote later that Napoleon agreed with him. By 1812, the marshal could not demolish such spurious charges; Caulaincourt had cleverly extricated himself at Lannes's expense. Dead men, they say, tell no tales.[63]

NOTES

1. Savary noted that the worst-case scenario would have been to pull back across the Oder and spend the winter in Prussia. Most of the resources there were being used to take care of the prisoners in Spandau and other fortresses, and even the abundant supplies in Stettin, for example, would not keep the Grande Armée through the winter. Savary, *Mémoires*, III, 19–20. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux d'opérations, November 1806, Carton MR 655.

2. Barante, *Souvenirs*, 192–94.

3. For conditions in Poland and the marshal's comments, see Marbot, *Mémoires*, I, 315–16; Rapp, *Mémoires*, 118; Barante, *Souvenirs*, 196.

4. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 163–64; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11251, Napoleon to Davout, 13 November 1806, XIII, 651–52; No. 11263, Napoleon to Lannes, 14 November 1806, XIII, 660.

5. Barante, *Souvenirs*, 196–97; Lannes to Napoleon, 17 and 18 November 1806, quoted in Colbert, *Traditions et souvenirs*, IV, 348–49.

6. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux d'opérations, November 1806, Carton MR 655; Murat, *Lettres et documents*, No. 2688 and No. 2696, Lannes to Murat, 29 November and 1 December 1806, V, 485–86, 495.

7. Barante, *Souvenirs*, 196, 209.

8. Murat, *Lettres et documents*, No. 2707, Murat to Lannes, 2 December 1806, No. 2714, Lannes to Murat, 4 December 1806, V, 2–3, 505. While the 5th Corps was going hungry, Napoleon had ordered a Te Deum sung in the Polish capital to commemorate his coronation and Austerlitz. Murat naturally attended the festivities.

9. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux d'opérations, December 1806, Carton MR 655; Barante, *Souvenirs*, 211; Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 22–25.

10. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11458, Dispositions générales, 13 December 1806, XIV, 96–99; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux d'opérations, December 1806, Carton MR 655; Larrey, *Mémoires* III, 25. Larrey said that "never was a march so difficult or so painful."

11. Sources for the battle at Pultusk include Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Berthier, 27 December 1806, Carton C^2 34; Mémoires reconnaissances: Tranchant de Laverne, "Campagne de Prusse et de Pologne 1806–1807," Carton MR 659; Levin August Gottlieb von Bennigsen, *Mémoires du général Bennigsen*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1907–10), II, 247–48; Friedrich Eduard Alexander von Höpfner, *Der Krieg von 1806 und 1807. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des preussichen Armee nach den Quellen des Kriegsarchivs bearbeitet*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1850–51), III, 109–119; Rapp, *Mémoires*, 127–29. Lannes reported that "the battlefield was a veritable sea of mud, extremely difficult for both men and horses."

12. Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 247; von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 110–11.

13. Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 26 December 1806, Carton C^{17*} 165^*. A charitable estimate of the 5th Corps' strength at Pultusk was 18,000. Even when Daultane from the 3rd Corps arrived, the combined French forces never exceeded 20,000. Bennigsen had twice that many from the beginning of the 26th. See Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Berthier, 27 December 1806, Carton C^2 34; von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 112.

14. Bennigsen claimed that Bagavout had less than 5,000 troops deployed on the Russian left, while Suchet launched his attack with more than 15,000. Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 247. See Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux d'opérations, December 1806, Carton MR 655; von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 112–13.

15. Louis-Nicolas Davout, *Opérations du 3rd Corps, 1806–1807* (Paris, 1896), 131–33; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Berthier, 27 December 1806, Carton C^2 34; von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 113. Bennigsen reported that prisoners informed him that the combined corps of Lannes and Davout, plus Murat's cavalry reserves, had confronted the Russians. From that erroneous information, Bennigsen concluded that the French opposing him at Pultusk numbered more than 50,000, and consequently a strategic withdrawal was in order. Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 248.

16. Lannes reported to Berthier that he lost only 700 killed and 1,500 wounded. Höpfner placed the figure at 10,000 killed and wounded, which would be nearly half of the 5th Corps. Bennigsen also reported that the French losses were more than 6,000. Sir Robert Wilson, who followed the Russian armies during the 1806–7 campaign, said that the French lost more than 10,000. Wilson never had anything bad to say about the Russians and nothing good to say about the French. While he was an eyewitness, his views must be evaluated with extreme care. See Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Berthier, 27 December 1806, Carton C^2 34; von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 118; Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 248; Sir Robert Wilson, *Brief Remarks on the Character and Composition of the Russian Army and a Sketch of the Campaigns in Poland in the Years 1806 and 1807* (London, 1810), 130; Poussereau, *L'histoire*, 181–82; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 11518, 47th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 30 December 1806, XIV, 151–53. The bulletin also noted that Lannes had been "somewhat ill for the past ten days." Napoleon had written a brief note to his subordinate, meant no doubt to cheer him up by praising his conduct at Pultusk, as well as his obvious loyalty and devotion to his emperor.

Correspondance de Napoléon Ier, No. 11516, Napoleon to Lannes, 29 December 1806, XIV, 149. When he found out about Lannes's report on Pultusk, claiming a victory and containing no mention whatsoever of Daultane's timely intervention that saved the 5th Corps from certain disaster, Davout was understandably upset, and informed Napoleon of his divisional general's contribution at Pultusk.

17. Larrey said that soldiers were now dropping like flies, filling the hospitals in Warsaw and the inadequate facilities he had set up where the various corps bivouacked. He blamed their illnesses on the forced marches without respite because October, lack of shelter, little food, and no wine—the latter he characterized as "comforting drink." Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 26–27. See also Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Journaux d'opérations, December 1806, Carton MR 655; Correspondance: Grande Armée, V Corps, 28 January 1807, Carton C^2 39; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Napoleon to Lannes, 28 January 1807, Carton C^2 39; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 191–92.

18. See Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Savary, 31 January 1807, Carton C^{17*} 165*; Mémoires reconnaissances, Vidal de la Blanche, "Friedland," Carton MR 2332.

19. According to Frédéric Masson, Maria Walewska first met Napoleon on 1 January 1807 at Bronia, as the emperor was traveling from Pultusk to Warsaw. The young countess wanted to be the first to welcome him to Poland and to plead the case for her country's independence from Russia. Her beauty and patriotism made an impression on Napoleon, who wanted to see her again. Masson related the efforts of Duroc and Prince Joseph Poniatowski, acting as go-betweens, to arrange a meeting. He also pointed out the countess's reluctance to see Napoleon again, but she was eventually persuaded by the pleas of delegations of Polish nobles and her own husband, the elderly, wealthy count, who insisted that her acquiescence would help Poland's cause. Frédéric Masson, *Napoleon and the Fair Sex* (London, 1894), 194–96; 200–204.

20. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 199–205; Poussereau, *L'histoire*, 191.

21. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Berthier to the Intendant-general of the Grande Armée, 1 May 1807, Carton C^2 45.

22. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12536, Napoleon to Berthier, 5 May 1807, XV, 240–41; Service historique, Situations, Corps de réserve, May 1807, Carton C^2 485; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12572, Napoleon to Lefebvre, 11 May 1807, XV, 270–71; Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 11 May 1807, Carton C^{17*} 165*. Berthier was explicit: he said that Lefebvre understood nothing beyond what was "particular" to his own command.

23. See Service historique, Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 11 May 1807, Carton C^{17*} 165*; Mémoires reconnaissances, "Campagne de Pologne," Carton MR 659; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12580, Napoleon to Lannes, 14 May 1807, XV, 275–76.

24. Montesquiou-Fézensac, *Souvenirs*, 99.

25. See Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Oudinot, 14 May 1807, Carton C^2 46; Lefebvre to Napoleon, 16 May 1807; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12593, 74th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 16 May 1807, XV, 289–92. The bulletin says that the Russians lost 900 killed, 1,500 wounded, and more than 200 prisoners. French losses were slight, at 225 killed or wounded. Lefebvre said the French losses were 70 killed, 205 wounded, and only three taken prisoner. He commended the 2nd

and 12th *Légère* in particular, and then congratulated virtually everyone else in glowing terms. Berthier said that the fighting lasted less than three hours. General Kirgener of the engineers, present during most of the siege, wrote that the success was due entirely to "Lefebvre's and Lannes's clever deployments, Oudinot's bravery, and the valor of the grenadiers." Because Lefebvre had done so little that Napoleon had to send in someone more qualified to bail him out, one may safely discount that bit of hyperbole. Kirgener was Lannes's brother-in-law, and one should be wary of family ties and excessive family praise. On the other hand, Oudinot's bravery was beyond question, and so was that of his grenadiers. See François-Joseph Kirgener de la Planta, *Précis du siège de Dantzick, fait par l'armée française en avril et mai 1807* (Paris, 1807), 25–26; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, "Campagne de Pologne," Carton MR 659; Montesquiou-Fézensac, *Souvenirs*, 113; Camille St-Aubin, *Siège de Dantzick en 1807* (Paris, 1818), 126.

26. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Oudinot, 30 May 1807, Carton C^2 47; Lannes to the army commissariat, 4 June 1807, Carton C^2 48; Correspondance de Berthier, Berthier to Lannes, 5 June 1807, Carton C^{17*} 165*.

27. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Berthier, 6 June 1807, Carton C^2 48.

28. Coignet, *Cahiers*, 190.

29. Bennigsen had reconnoitered the area around Heilsberg in March, and selected it as an advantageous position for his army's concentration if the French attacked him. Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 164, 169–70; Léon-Nicolas Michel, *Étude sur la période du 5 au 14 juin de la campagne de 1807* (Paris, 1909), 11–12. Schmolainen was on the Alle River, about three miles north of Guttstadt. Lannes did not say precisely how many prisoners he took, nor did he clarify the extent of his confrontation with the Russians. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 9 June 1807, Carton C^2 48.

30. Sources for the combat at Heilsberg include Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes's report to Napoleon, 23 June 1807, Carton C^2 48; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12747, 78th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 13 June 1807, XV, 404–11; Savary, *Mémoires*, III, 76–84; von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 604–9.

31. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12747, 78th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 13 June 1807, XV, 409; Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 175; von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 606.

32. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 23 June 1807, Carton C^2 48; Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 177.

33. Von Höpfner estimated the French losses at 1,400 killed, 10,300 wounded, and 900 prisoners, with Russians casualties at 3,000 killed, 6,000 wounded. Lannes reported that Verdier's division suffered 2,286 killed and wounded, whereas Soult claimed he lost 6,000 killed and wounded. See von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 615; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 23 June 1807; Soult to Napoleon, 12 June 1807, Carton C^2 48; Savary, *Mémoires*, III, 82–83.

34. D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, II, 419–20; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 23 June 1807, Carton C^2 48.

35. Carl Friedrich von Both, *Relation der Schlacht bey Friedland den 14ten Juny 1807* (Berlin, 1807), 1; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, Nos. 12751 and 12753, Napoleon to Lannes, 13 June 1807, XV, 413; 414–15.

36. Prince Gallitzin took thirty-three cavalry squadrons on his reconnaissance mission. With that number he obviously had no difficulty dislodging the French patrols. See

Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 191; von Both, *Schlacht bey Friedland*, 4–5; Victor Derode, *Nouvelle relation de la bataille de Friedland* (Paris, 1839), 12; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 13 June 1807, Carton C^2 49.

37. Bennigsen wrote that he never intended to risk a serious engagement against Napoleon's numerically-superior forces with just part of his army in a position that offered him little in the way of terrain advantage. Evidently the Russian commander disagreed with von Both on the desirability of the Friedland plain. Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 195; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, "Campagne de Pologne," Carton MR 659.

38. Von Both, *Schlacht bey Friedland*, 8–10.; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, "Friedland," Carton MR 659. De Ségur also noted that from one in the morning until after eleven, Lannes was completely on his own. De Ségur, *Mémoires*, III, 179. For sources on the battle of Friedland, see Service historique, Correspondance; Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 22 June 1807, Carton C^2 49; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12767, 79th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 17 June 1807, XV, 424–49; Derode, *Nouvelle relation*, 13–75; Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1807*, IV, 346–57; von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 646–71; von Both, *Schlacht bey Friedland*, 2–19; Wilson, *Brief Remarks*, 152–61.

39. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, État de la Grande Armée à Friedland, Carton C^2 49.

40. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 22 June 1807, Carton C^2 49; Mémoires reconnaissances, "Friedland," Carton MR 2332.

41. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, "Campagne de Pologne," Carton MR 659; Derode, *Nouvelle relation*, 20. Grouchy wrote that Lannes had ordered him to hold Heinrichsdorf no matter what it cost. Emmanuel Grouchy, marquis de, *Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1873), II, 329.

42. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, "Friedland, Carton MR 2332; "Campagne de Pologne," Carton MR 659; Grouchy, *Mémoires*, II, 327–28; Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 22 June 1807, Carton C^2 49; Derode, *Nouvelle relation*, 22.

43. Michel, *Étude*, 37.

44. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, "Friedland," Carton 2332; Grouchy, *Mémoires*, II, 328; von Höpfner, *Krieg 1807*, III, 661–62; Derode, *Nouvelle relation*, 36.

45. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 22 June 1807, Carton C^2 49.

46. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, "Campagne de Pologne," Carton MR 659; "Friedland," Carton 2332.

47. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12767, 79th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 17 June 1807, XV, 424–29; Derode, *Nouvelle relation*, 41; de Ségur, *Mémoires*, III, 180–81.

48. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12767, 79th Bulletin of the Grande Armée, 17 June 1807, XV, 424–29.

49. See Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, "Campagne de Pologne," Carton MR 659; "Friedland," Carton MR 2332; Bennigsen, *Mémoires*, II, 202, n. 2; Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1807*, IV, 355. Bennigsen claimed that the French, "confident of their numerical superiority, did not think that our troops could re-cross the Alle in good order. [When] they attempted to deliver the final blow to our ranks, they were repulsed in a manner that should have shown them respect for Russian bravery." Bennigsen, *Mémoires*,

II, 203. The retreat across the Alle might have begun in good order, but in the last two hours of the 14th, as the French increased their steady pressure on the enemy, orderliness degenerated into flight.

50. Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Napoleon, 22 June 1807, Carton C^2 49. As usual, the casualty figures vary. Using various sources, more or less reliable, a decent estimate is possible. See Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, État des pertes, 14 June 1807, Carton C^2 49; Lannes to Berthier, 23 June 1807, Carton C^2 50; Mémoires reconnaissances, "Campagne de Pologne," Carton MR 659; Lettow-Vorbeck, *Krieg 1807*, IV, 355–56.

51. Von Both, the Prussian witness to the events before, during, and after the battle of Friedland, could only be expected to praise his Russian allies. In addition, he spoke at length with Oudinot after the battle, and most of his commentary on the events originates from that interview. Consequently, von Both never mentioned Lannes; he thought the commander of the Reserve Corps did not exist, and that Oudinot was singularly responsible for the French victory, sharing it somewhat with Ney. Von Both, *Schlacht bey Friedland*, 6–7. See Service historique, Correspondance: Grande Armée, Lannes to Berthier, 23 June 1807; Lannes to the King of Saxony, 23 June 1807, Carton C^2 50; Service historique, Situations, 17 June 1807, Carton C^2 485.

52. Archives nationales, AF IV 1311, dossier 1807, "Tableau des domaines dont Sa Majesté a disposé en Pologne par décrêt du 30 juin 1807," Ordre No. 4. Perhaps Napoleon also realized that the 79th Bulletin was as deficient in praise for Lannes as the one after Austerlitz had been, and granted Lannes official leave. Service historique, Situations, Corps de réserve, 15 July 1807, Carton C^2 485; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 12897, Dispositions générales pour l'armée, 12 July 1807, XV, 514–18; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 217.

53. Lannes, *Le maréchal Lannes*, 119–20.

54. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 13176, Napoleon to Berthier, 23 September 1807, XVI, 52–54.

55. Today this château is better known as Maisons-Lafitte, after the wealthy nineteenth-century financier who purchased it during the Restoration. See Archives nationales, MC et LIII, Minutes Pérignon, notaire à Paris, 26 vendémiaire an XIII [18 October 1804]; Jean Stern, *Le Château de Maisons* (Paris, 1934), 168–69. Archives nationales, MC et LIII, "Inventaire après le décès du maréchal Lannes," 27 July 1809; Poussereau, *L'histoire*, 134. This inventory included not only the original purchase information but an incredibly detailed listing of everything in the rue de Varennes house and at Château de Maisons. The residence on the rue de Varenne is now the Italian embassy.

56. Archives nationales, AF IV 1040, "Travail des dotations émargé par l'Empereur;" AF IV 1311, dossier 1809,"État des concessions accordées par Sa Majesté l'Empereur."

57. Murat, *Lettres et documents,* No.3407, 14 July 1807, VI 226; Journal du Gers, 25 July 1808.

58. Zins, *Favori*, 213.

59. General Désiré Chlapowski, *Mémoires sur les guerres de Napoléon 1806–1813*, trans. J. V. Chelminski and A. Malibran (Paris, 1908), 86–87; Archives nationales. *Almanach impérial* (Paris 1809).

60. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 14354, Napoleon to Lannes, 1 October 1808, XVII, 618.

61. Steiger, *Goethes Leben*, V, 238–44; Anita and Walter Dietze, eds., *Treffliche*

Wirkungen: Anekdoten von und über Goethe, 2 vols. (Munich, 1987), I, 386.

62. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 233.

63. Caulaincourt's memoirs recount the retreat from Moscow, while the ambassador was Napoleon's travelling companion, and provide the setting during which Caulaincourt blamed Lannes for warning Alexander about Napoleon's "ambition." The comments that Caulaincourt attributed to the emperor concerning Lannes are specious, and totally out of character for Napoleon to have made. Equally specious are the motives that Caulaincourt attributed to Lannes at Erfurt for confiding in Alexander. Armand de Caulaincourt, *With Napoleon in Russia. The Memoirs of General de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza* (New York, 1935), 379–81.

Chapter 9

The Dogs of War: The Second Siege of Saragossa, 1808–1809

I'd rather fight ten pitched battles in one day than this bloody war against houses!
—Marshal Lannes

Though Napoleon rarely asked his subordinates what they thought of his military or political plans, Lannes had already told him *his* opinion of any French involvement in Spain. "Pure folly," he had said. "Don't go." The emperor responded by dragging him along to the Peninsula without giving him time to pack. They left Rambouillet on 29 October with as many staff officers as he could round up on short notice, leaving Berthier to sort out the campaign's final details. Lannes managed to dash off a brief note to his father-in-law when he reached Bayonne on 3 November: "I've *always* hated this place—the emperor knows I'm here only because of my loyalty and devotion." It is more likely he jumped at the chance to go, despite his negative opinion, after more than a year piddling about with the gardens at Maisons and furnishing his townhouse.[1]

Napoleon reached Tolosa, the first town on the other side of the Pyrenees, on 4 November. He had urged his carriage and those of his staff forward at such a pace that they outdistanced supplies and personal belongings and headed for Vitoria. A mountain range loomed between them and the city, one that could not be crossed in carriages. Napoleon ordered everyone out and onto horseback. Lannes had to borrow a horse from his aide, Marbot, and galloped off after the emperor, who apparently did not think icy mountain tracks much reason to slow down. He should have been worried; the passes across Mondragon, a range with sharp escarpments and dangerous switchbacks, lay under layers of snow and thick ice.[2]

Napoleon led a charmed existence; Lannes did not. The borrowed horse, forced into a gallop by his unfamiliar and inept rider, slipped, fell, and pinned Lannes against the ice. Struggling to regain his feet, the frightened animal fell again before he regained his footing and trotted off. Flattened by twelve hundred

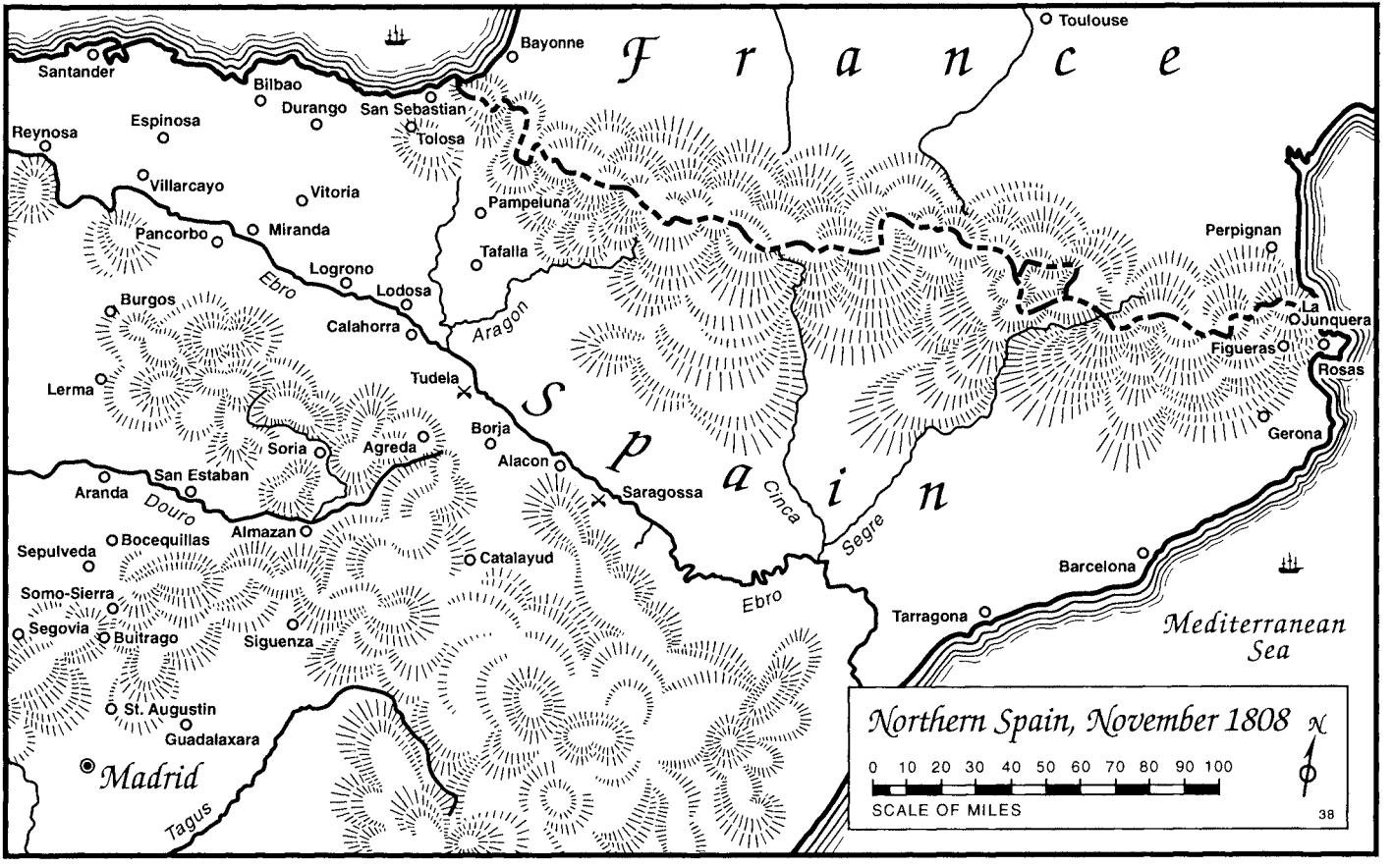
pounds of frightened horseflesh, the marshal could not move. He could not call out either, but Napoleon was out of earshot. Marbot and the other aides literally stumbled over Lannes in the dark, and one of them hurried away to find help. When he joined the nearly frozen group, Larrey conducted a brief examination by the light of a pitch torch. He could see severe bruising and suspected there was internal bleeding. He could do nothing there on the ice and, realizing it was just as far back to Tolosa, Larrey decided to continue down to Vitoria. At least the town would have adequate shelter and provisions. Carried down on an improvised stretcher slung across a gun carriage, Lannes stayed at Vitoria for five days under Larrey's care. He chose not to mention this little mishap to his wife, either because he did not want her to worry or because he was embarrassed by his stupidity.[3]

Five days was not nearly enough time but it was all Lannes allowed. When he received a message from Napoleon asking him to come to Burgos, he declared himself healed and struggled out of bed. Getting to Burgos by horseback was out of the question; jolting over frozen roads in a carriage did not seem very appealing either, but he did it, and reached the emperor on 11 November. There was not much to do in Burgos, Napoleon dodged his pointed questions about a definite command and made him hold reviews instead, and he chafed under the boredom.

"Nobody's fighting," he wrote Louise, "because the Spanish are running away. At this rate we'll all be home in two months." When he asked Napoleon during one of his visits why they were even in Spain, a logical question under the circumstances, the emperor replied that he had to keep his brother Joseph on the throne. In case that did not seem a sufficient reason, he said he had made Joseph king of Spain to ensure the Bonaparte dynasty, and admitted his brother needed help staying put in Madrid. "He's not at all military, you know." Lannes knew that well enough, but chose to keep his opinion of Joseph to himself.[4]

Frustratingly idle in Burgos, his mood grew worse until he became unduly irate when the least of his orders was improperly executed. Irritated, in constant pain, he reverted to his grenadier days and swore like one. He jumped an artillery captain at Burgos who positioned his guns incorrectly and subjected him to a particularly rough, lengthy, and public reprimand for his incompetence. Several witnesses told Napoleon, who discussed the incident with Duroc. Lannes overheard enough to know he was the subject of the emperor's remarks but could not hear the details. Curious, he later asked Marbot, who had been present, to fill him in. The aide hesitated because he knew Napoleon had been critical, but Lannes insisted. "He said you *could* exhibit all the qualities of a first-rate commander," Marbot explained, embarrassed, "but at the moment, your excessive temper is keeping you from reaching that level. You shouldn't have gone after that artillery captain the way you did—a real commander wouldn't have acted like that." As quick to apologize—in most cases—as he was to fly into a rage and already ashamed of his behavior, Lannes tried to change his ways. Besides, he knew Napoleon was right.[5]

Napoleon spent his time in Burgos sifting through reports regarding the Spanish armies and the juntas controlling them. Military efforts against the French had already been hampered by this confused collection of armies and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Somo-Sierra
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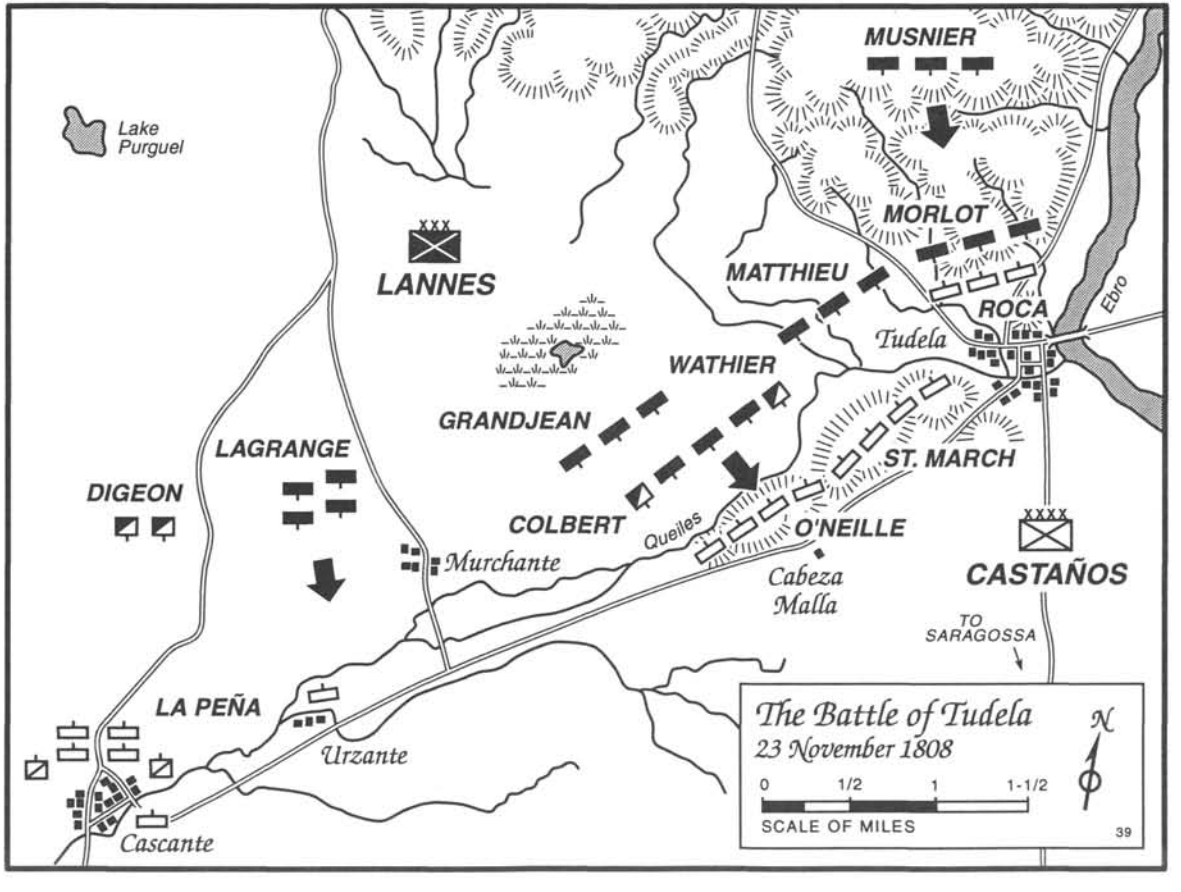
provincial juntas, each with its own agenda. By October, however, the Spanish had formed a central junta at Aranjuez under the leadership of Count José Moñino Floridablanca, with military operations coordinated by General Francisco Xavier Castaños. The many forces had been reduced to four: one in Catalonia, commanded by General Vives; another in Galicia and Asturias under General Joaquín Blake; a third in reserve at Saragossa led by José Palafox; and the largest, the Army of the Center, commanded by Castaños.[6]

The previous summer Palafox had been the hero of the first siege of Saragossa, and Castaños had whipped General Victor's forces at Baílen. Now the two Spaniards had 50,000 troops near Tudela, and Napoleon planned to attack them there. Because Marshal Bon-Adrien Moncey's 3rd Corps had so far made no headway against Castaños, the emperor made a command change. He thought Lannes had been attached to his staff long enough and had recovered sufficiently to lead an offensive. Whether Lannes felt well enough for the task was questionable, but he left for Logroño on 19 November with Lagrange's infantry division and General Colbert's light cavalry from Ney's 6th Corps. Moncey may not have liked being replaced, but his cautious—and thus far unsuccessful—tactics were no match for Lannes's determination. A Polish officer who had plenty of opportunity to observe both marshals in Spain later wrote that Moncey simply did not have the quickness of vision or initiative that Lannes had.[7]

With 30,000 troops and borrowed divisions from the 6th Corps, Lannes and Moncey advanced to Lodosa on 20 November. They waited two days for Napoleon's orders and reports from General Charles Lefebvre-Desnoëttes, whose Polish Lancers were scouting the area around Tudela. Lannes wrote to Napoleon on 22 November that "the enemy has between 30,000 and 50,000 men, maybe even as many as 60,000, around Alfara, Tudela, and Caparosa."[8]

Castaños was at Calahorra when he heard the French were advancing from Logroño and Lodosa straight toward him, with the rest of Ney's 6th Corps headed toward Soría and Agreda. If he stayed at Calahorra, the two forces would catch him in a vise. He had plenty of time to retire to Saragossa, but he stopped between Tudela and Tarazona, thinking that was far enough. His line stretched nearly eleven miles, held with 45,000 troops, fewer than Lannes had estimated. Two easily defended ridges on the right ran through Tudela and four miles beyond. The center was flat and open, and the shallow Queiles River could be forded anywhere. The left stretched from the village of Cascante to Tarazona, where General Tomás La Peña's 8,000 troops were cantoned. Castaños held a council of war with his generals, but it accomplished nothing more than an opportunity for his generals to air their divisive opinions. Palafox was the most outspoken, insisting on the defense of Saragossa. At least Castaños took the larger view, preferring to defeat Moncey first. Angry that his opinion had been ignored, Palafox left at dawn on 23 November for Saragossa, taking most of his Aragonese army and leaving Castaños to face the advancing French alone.[9]

Lannes left at dawn after his divisions and the 3rd Corps had rested overnight at Alfaro. He marched with Moncey and General Pierre Watier's cavalry to Tudela, sending Lagrange's infantry division, Colbert's light cavalry, and General Armand-Joseph Digeon's cavalry toward Cascante. Because he had not bothered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to send out cavalry patrols, the first notice Castaños had of the French advance came when Watier's cavalry rode up to the walls of Tudela. General John Bruce O'Neille dallied on the north side of the Ebro River, in no hurry to cross with his 17,000 troops in response to Castaños's urgent summons. Castaños's orders during the rest of that morning became increasingly urgent as he attempted to close the critical gaps in his line. At Cascante, La Peña refused to budge, contained there by two French dragoon brigades, while farther to his right two Spanish divisions near Tarazona failed to engage the enemy at all.

Lannes attacked though he just had Lagrange's division with him. The initial assault failed, but it revealed a wide gap between the two Spanish armies. When the rest of his troops arrived, he sent General Antoine Morlot's six battalions up to the heights above Tudela and General David Maurice-Mathieu's twelve battalions to deal with the lackadaisical O'Neille. Both French generals were successful. Morlot chased the Spanish from the heights down into Tudela, where they fled from the town and out along the road toward Saragossa. Maurice-Mathieu pushed O'Neille back, while Lefebvre-Desnoëttes charged between O'Neille and Belgian general Philippe-François Saint-March, striking both of them in the flank. Most of these forces also broke and fled; many joined Palafox's garrison at Saragossa.[10]

Castaños had been defeated by "an effort . . . neither very vigorous nor well-sustained [but] sufficient for its purposes, [which] demonstrated the incapacity of Spanish generals and the lack of steadiness in Spanish soldiers," according to one acerbic English source. In defense of Castaños, it should be remembered that he had fought without Palafox, who had abandoned him, and La Peña, who had refused to leave Cascante. On the other hand, Lannes did not command at Tudela with his usual style; he was lucky to be standing at the end of the day. Though he did not launch a sustained or particularly inspired attack against the Spanish, he managed to execute the spirit of his orders. With Castaños's forces defeated and dispersed, he thought he could quit and let Ney cut off the fleeing Spaniards' line of retreat. He sent Moncey to pursue Palafox and dispatched Lagrange and Colbert to round up any Spanish stragglers along the Catalayud road , then stayed in Tudela for ten days, too exhausted to return to Burgos.[11]

Regardless of its quality, Lannes was pleased with his victory. "I've never seen such a complete rout," he wrote in his report on 29 November. "Our losses were 150 to 200 killed, and only 300 or 400 wounded." In a less official note to Napoleon, he expressed his opinion of Moncey and how he thought future operations should be conducted in the Peninsula. "Moncey doesn't begin to understand [your] style [of warfare]—I've never seen anybody as cold as he is. . . . I think success depends on having one person command Ney's and Moncey's corps." He probably meant he was the best man for the job, but not because he necessarily wanted it. Because he was in Spain and likely to be there for quite some time, he might as well make the most of it.[12]

The pursuit of Castaños, begun too late for Napoleon's taste, continued through the first week of December. Lagrange was replaced by Maurice-Mathieu; he and Colbert chased the Spanish to Catalayud and from there to Guadalajara, where they received orders to halt. On 9 December, the weary infantry and cavalry divisions were returned to Ney, and Lannes left Tudela to join Napoleon,

who was headed for Madrid. He brought up the subject of a unified command again at Chamartin, the imperial headquarters outside Madrid. Though he talked long and earnestly, the emperor made no comment. Instead, he spent a week making plans for another offensive, this time against the British. When the French had attacked Sir John Moore's cavalry at Sahagun, Napoleon thought he could overtake the British if he got there in time. Between him and Moore's position in northwestern Spain, nearly on the coast, lay another mountain range. Crossing this one in winter would be exceptionally unpleasant and dangerous.

Napoleon left Chamartin on 22 December, reaching the Guadarrama mountains the next day. The temperature had dropped below zero and strong winds blew straight out of the north. Snow and thick ice made the narrow paths treacherous, while the wind was so strong everybody had to link arms to keep from being blown over the edges and into the ravines. Napoleon trudged through the passes firmly sandwiched between Duroc and Lannes. Nearing the top, the emperor and his exhausted entourage caught a few hours' rest, building fires and drinking wine to keep warm, then descended and marched toward Medina del Campo. Less fortunate, the artillery and the dismounted cavalry gave up about three-fourths of the way to the top of the pass. They spent the night stranded on a plateau until the sun melted some of the ice.[13]

Napoleon pushed on for Valladolid, discovering how very cold it was, especially at night. The wind never let up, temperatures hovered below zero, and snow fell intermittently. It was not the cold and the snow, nor the constant trekking up and down mountains that bothered Lannes—he wanted something to do. He was beginning to wonder if Tudela had been an aberration, a minor blip in the emperor's scheme for Spain. At Valladolid he listened while Napoleon completed his plans for an offensive against Moore in the north and the capture of Saragossa to the east; he did not hear his name mentioned with regard to either. Instead, Soult pursued Moore to La Coruña, Moncey invested Saragossa, and Joseph Bonaparte made plans to return to Madrid. Rather than resenting the fact he was not involved in any of it, Lannes should have paid more attention to the French failure to capture Saragossa.

Founded during the days of Roman Hispania, Saragossa was the historic capital of the province of Aragón. North of the city, the Ebro River flowed wide and deep, a long stone bridge spanning it to the northern suburb of San Lázaro. To the east the little Huerba tributary circled to the south and along the western walls. Most houses were stone and brick, and streets formed narrow, convoluted passageways, except for the Coso, a wide thoroughfare dividing the city east to west. At least fifty churches and convents served all spiritual needs, and the Inquisition's Aljafería castle reminded people of strict Spanish orthodoxy. Above these many religious symbols towered Nuestra Señora del Pilar, the patroness of Saragossa and Aragón since the days of Santiago del Compostella. Rivers, houses, churches, convents, narrow streets, 50,000 inhabitants, and Our Lady of Pilar had defeated the French in the summer of 1808. The townspeople had not considered the possibility of another siege as they repaired damage from the first. Castaños's troops pouring into Saragossa changed their minds. Sir Charles Vaughan, a young Englishman who had been with Palafox during the first siege,

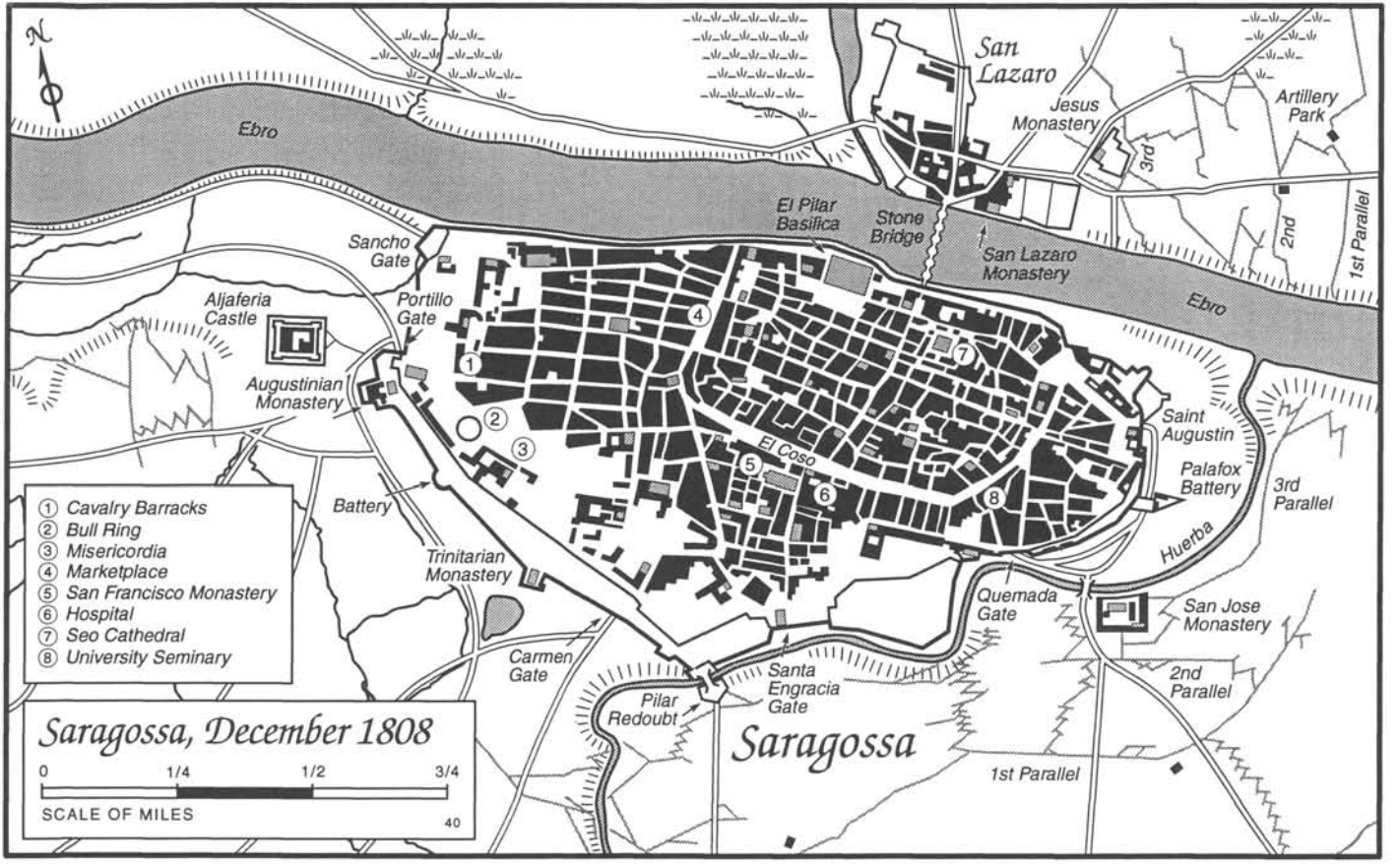
commented on the feverish, last-minute preparations and the civilians' determination.[14]

The 34,000 troops garrisoning the city included those Palafox had brought from Tudela, scattered contingents from the Army of the Center, and stragglers from Valencian and Murcian forces. Palafox had more than 160 guns, some of which had been abandoned that summer by the French. In spite of the regular troops, real resistance remained in the hands of armed and ferocious civilians. The monks were the most determined, organizing women, including many nuns, into quasi-military companies to bring food, water, and ammunition to the fighters, nurse the wounded, and replace fallen defenders.[15]

Palafox ordered old fortifications strengthened and new ones built. The Augustinian and Trinitarian convents became fortresses, with earthworks guarding the Portillo and Carmen gates. Two large redoubts with batteries covered the Huerba ravine. Volunteers dug deep, water-filled ditches connected by a network of palisades on the north side, bordered by three batteries and the convents of Jésus and San Lazáro, packed with troops. Palafox prepared for street-fighting, and citizens bricked up the first-floor windows and doors of their houses, cut loopholes for firing, knocked holes in interior walls for communications, and built barricades in the streets. Outside the southern walls, they razed villas and olive groves to eliminate enemy cover. Finally, Palafox estimated the needs of his garrison and gathered enough food and ammunition for three months or more—the civilians were on their own. Patriotism and religion in the midst of these grueling preparations motivated everyone. Palafox and his junta considered any doubts regarding victory or lack of enthusiasm as treason. Monks erected a gallows in the middle of the Coso to hang traitors as a warning. Palafox did not want to take such extreme measures, but his Aragonese pride and the strong influence of his clerical advisors, Don Basilio Boggiero and Don Santiago Sas, trapped him.[16]

Napoleon knew Saragossa was the linchpin of Spanish resistance, and had no choice but to take the city. He had sent Moncey there to do it, but the marshal realized his corps of 15,000 men was no match for 50,000 fanatical defenders. He camped twenty miles away at Alagón on 2 December, supplied his troops, and waited for reinforcements. Mortier's 5th Corps finally arrived with orders to cover Moncey while he conducted the siege. They returned to Saragossa on 20 December when, in a rare burst of energy, Moncey ordered his troops to storm the walls. They captured Monte Torrero, the least fortified position. Buoyed by his success, Moncey sent a note to Palafox suggesting surrender; quite understandably he refused. Because he began to see that frontal assaults were unwise, Moncey ordered approach trenches dug and walls shelled to weaken them as he completed the preparations for a protracted siege. Napoleon did not appreciate the word *protracted*; he insisted on immediate results, and replaced cautious Moncey with the more impulsive General Junot on 29 December.[17]

After two weeks of discouraging reports from Junot, whose luck was no better than Moncey's had been, Napoleon decided he needed another commander. He put Lannes in charge of the siege, including command of both the 3rd and 5th Corps. When Napoleon informed him of his decision on 9 January, Lannes was


N
Ebro
San Lazaro
Jesus Monastery
Artillery Park
3rd
2nd
1st Parallel
El Pilar Basilica
Stone Bridge
San Lazaro Monastery
Ebro
Sancho Gate
Portillo Gate
Aljaferia Castle
Augustinian Monastery
El Coso
Saint Augustin
Palafox Battery
3rd Parallel
Huerba
Battery
Trinitarian Monastery
Quemada Gate
San Jose Monastery
2nd Parallel
Carmen Gate
Santa Engracia Gate
Pilar Redoubt
Saragossa
1st Parallel
1 Cavalry Barracks
2 Bull Ring
3 Misericordia
4 Marketplace
5 San Francisco Monastery
6 Hospital
7 Seo Cathedral
8 University Seminary
Saragossa, December 1808
0 1/4 1/2 3/4
SCALE OF MILES
40

momentarily speechless. He *hated* sieges—they took too long, they were tedious, unrewarding, dangerous, and dirty, with no opportunities for his particular brand of personal heroics. Because he had been so outspoken about the necessity for unified command and because he was trying very hard to control his unruly temper, he could hardly complain that the emperor's decision was not what he had meant at all and certainly not what he wanted. With considerable misgivings he went off to pack for what he assumed would be a lengthy sojourn in Aragón. "The same time he ordered me to Saragossa the emperor said he was returning to Paris," Lannes wrote to his wife. "I wanted to go with him, but because he places so much store in taking that city I couldn't refuse. The last fifteen days have been awful—following [Napoleon] all over northern Spain with no servants, supplies, baggage. . . . I haven't even had time to change my clothes if I *had* clothes to change into."[18]

Lannes wrote to Junot that he would be assuming command as soon as he reached Saragossa. Junot took violent exception to being superseded. He blamed his "enemies" for giving Lannes "the honor of the conquest [of Saragossa],"and accused them of betraying him. Though he did not say who these reputed enemies were, he obviously meant Napoleon, Berthier, Moncey, Mortier, and certainly Lannes. Junot's wife, reflecting a loyal viewpoint and her usual caustic style, called Lannes "un mauvais camarade." In her opinion Saragossa's capture was a "matter of mere arithmetical calculation"—so many houses destroyed each day meant victory, and one that Lannes could achieve no better than "a thousand other [men]." Louis-Antoine Lejeune, one of Berthier's aides who was observing the siege operations, recalled that Junot was so angry that he swore he would redouble his assaults on the city so Lannes would not get the credit.[19]

Lannes reached Saragossa on 22 January and observers, dishing out an almost embarrassing amount of praise, claimed the army's morale revived immediately. Lejeune said Lannes was just what the troops needed—the positive example of a "strong and unique personality" providing leadership and hope of victory. From Madrid, King Joseph was equally relieved, because the pacification of his rebellious kingdom depended in no small measure on the capture of Saragossa. His relief arose from the fact that Junot was no longer in charge, although he agreed Napoleon had made an astute choice in sending Lannes. He also noted that the situation at Saragossa had deteriorated so much under Junot's leadership that "a few more days of his mismanagement would mean the whole siege would have to be lifted."[20]

The next day Lannes recalled Suchet's division from Catalayud where Junot had sent it. He thought protecting communications with Madrid with 9,000 veteran troops was a luxury he could not afford, particularly as guerrilla bands were free to harass the siege operations. That evening he settled down in the middle of his troops in an abandoned, ramshackle inn; his aides sarcastically called it *Maison Blanche* and did what they could to make it habitable. Lannes's choice was quite a change from Junot's style—the superseded commander had spent his time comfortably ensconced in a small villa as far away from the French camp as he could reasonably get.[21]

Lannes knew from his military experience in particular and siege tactics in

general that assaults would fail. He also knew from studying Saragossa's defenses that he could not take the city by capturing or destroying any one or two positions; he would have to attack and capture each of the fifty-three formidable and tenaciously defended convents and churches one at a time. He would mine, blow up, and then assault every house, a mini fort defended by its owners. He would clear each street, barricaded by civilians and regulars. Finally, he knew the process would take a very long time, unless the mining worked and unless his assault troops held up in the face of suicidal resistance. He had already seen and heard enough in Spain to understand the odds. "I don't know if this is a political war," he wrote, "but it is inhumane and irrational . . . it's a mistake to attack convictions because you'll never win—convictions can't be taken by force." He knew the troops he had brought to Saragossa might be enough to destroy walls, churches, and houses, but he seriously doubted he had enough to destroy the defenders' faith.[22]

Because he knew each side would suffer terribly, Lannes wanted to save Saragossa from inevitable destruction. He hoped Palafox understood these harsh realities and decided to communicate with him directly. He wrote a letter on 24 January explaining the situation in Spain: Moore's recent defeat at La Coruña, the defeat of other Spanish field armies, and the futility of expecting any reinforcements. Because Palafox was effectively cut off, he urged him to surrender with honor and avoid further casualties. Lannes sent one of his aides, Captain Joseph Saint-Mars, to deliver the letter, though sending his senior aide with such a message into the heart of the fanatical defense was dangerous. Palafox's envoy met Saint-Mars at the gates, blindfolded him, and led him through the streets to the convent church of Santa Engracía. Many in the crowds were so incensed at the sight of his uniform that they shouted for the monks to kill him at once. The escort managed to keep them at bay and delivered him to the church. He waited for nearly two hours until Palafox decided to see what sort of message he had brought. Saint-Mars waited for another hour or two while Palafox composed a reply, then faced the gauntlet of the hostile crowds as he was escorted back to Lannes's headquarters.[23]

Palafox rejected the proposal either because he wanted to or because the monks insisted. Whatever the reason, he replied in a manner guaranteed to destroy the marshal's generosity. "It would indeed be a great honor for [you] to conquer this city in an open, fair fight," Palafox wrote, "but not with cannon and shells, which only frighten cowards. I know the type of warfare France uses—Spain will teach her how to fight. I also know exactly the forces I am facing, and ten times that amount could not force me to surrender. This city will gain its honor among its own ruins, and I recognize neither fear nor surrender." He included a copy of the Saragossa *Gaceta* with its glowing—but fabricated—tales of Spanish victories to emphasize his point.[24]

Lannes was furious with Palafox's high-sounding intransigence, angry that Palafox had called him a liar, and very offended that he had scorned his concern for Saragossa's citizens. In another time and another place, Lannes would have called him out on the spot and run him through for the insult. As it was, Palafox had sworn this siege would be a war to the death, *une guerre de l'outrance*, and

Lannes would give it to him.

Two days later, he directed the artillery to shell the city as his infantry prepared to rush the breaches. Thirteen batteries opened fire and the resulting firestorm swept through the streets. Shells tore large holes in walls as stone buildings crumbled and fell before the siege guns. They opened three major breaches in the eastern, southern and southwestern defenses, silencing the Spanish batteries, and three columns of infantry raced through the breaches. The first, led by Colonel Joseph Rogniat, took the convent of Santa Engracía and the square behind it. Another column of Polish infantry captured the Capuchin monastery. The third column, directed toward the convent of Santa Monica, took but failed to hold it. The French lost 350 men in less than two hours. According to Casamayor, who in better times worked in the archives of the Real Audencia and kept a daily journal during the siege, the French simply overwhelmed the defenders. "Though [the enemy] suffered many casualties, [we] still could not resist them. . . . Their artillery was too plentiful, their troops too numerous." Don Pedro Maria Ric, a member of Palafox's junta, claimed the bombardment was so intense that the clergy had to suspend their daily masses. Lannes wrote the next day that "they defend their city with real ferocity. . . . It will be a long and difficult road until the end—I'm on the go day and night."[25]

The civilians had relied more on Palafox's regulars than on themselves. However, after the French success against the two large convents, Palafox knew he must motivate his irregulars. "A few short hours of uninterrupted combat will be sufficient to rid us of these perfidious rascals," he told them. He added he would immediately execute anyone lacking in zeal. He did not need terrorism to inspire the defenders; they were quite capable of it without his exhortations. Casamayor wrote in his diary that "we found and hanged the [Polish soldier] who killed Don Manuel Aguilár and the Mother Superior of the Altobás convent last August." They had very long memories, these defenders, and they exacted retribution for the first siege while they resisted the second.[26]

Lannes knew the difficult and dirty street-by-street fighting had just begun. Miners and sappers were the keys to French success; they might be slow, but they would be effective. The miners dealt with each house like a fortification, and the assault troops would not advance until the houses had been blown up. Lannes had a finite number of men to make it work, and knew Napoleon could not spare him any reinforcements. Success therefore depended on two factors: speed—the emperor insisted on that, and caution—Napoleon had replaced two commanders for being *too* cautious. Lannes had to find a middle ground, and the prospect seemed pretty grim, particularly because Palafox had redoubled his efforts. He appointed monks to direct the civilian fighters and ordered them to wear white sashes over their black cassocks so they would be readily visible. His advisor Don Santiago Sas, hero of the first siege, constantly urged everyone to greater diligence in the name of Nuestra Señora del Pilar.[27]

Lannes scarcely had time to write reports to Napoleon, though he knew they were expected, and even less for the formalities of duplicate copies to King Joseph. He managed a brief message late at night on 30 January. "You can't begin to imagine the defenders' ferocity . . . only the miners can take Saragossa. I

told the engineers to blow up as many houses as they could; attacking morale like that *might* make the defenders see reason. Our conditions are as bad as they can possibly be; the daily bread ration isn't guaranteed and we don't have anything else. The hospital conditions are deplorable—no medicine, no bandages." With regard to quick results, he reminded Berthier that a degree of caution was imperative; otherwise he would have no troops left. He was equally honest with his family. "We're all exhausted; I've had scarcely any sleep for the last eight days, but I don't care—I just want to *finish* this!"[28]

Though he worried about his troops' morale and well-being, Lannes did not seem to care about his own. His staff cringed at the risks he took and pleaded with him not to be such an easy target for Spanish snipers. He ignored their warnings and went about his business with an absentminded disregard for the rudiments of safety. Lejeune recalled one of the marshal's depressingly regular trips into the line of fire. Instead of using the trenches, Lannes took his staff across an open field to within range of the walls of Saragossa. Worse, when he climbed a small rise for a better view, sharpshooters on the palisades "aimed for his brilliant uniform," shot holes in his cloak, and wounded one of the staff officers. Lannes never moved, but everyone else, including Lejeune, dove into the nearest ditch. He was "a perfect example of temerity and sang-froid," until the sheepish staff crawled out of the trench. In spite of Lejeune's romantic prose, by this time Lannes's uniform was more likely disreputable rather than brilliant. Viewing the scene with an artist's eye for the dramatic, Lejeune also confused temerity with stupidity.[29]

Several days later when Lannes inspected advance-posts near the Jésus convent, a sniper fired at him and missed, the ball just singeing Lannes's jacket. Exasperated with being a target for such inept marksmanship, Lannes jumped up on a nearby wall and fired back. The sniper scuttled away, but the Spanish artillery behind the church had a clear shot at Lannes and his staff. One of the officers standing near him was cut in two. The survivors later agreed that bravery was one thing, suicidal exposure was quite another.[30]

The French now controlled most of the key outer works and were inching their way cautiously inside the city. They mined and blew the San Augustín convent on 1 February, then spent the rest of the day fighting for every foot of ground among the smoldering ruins. Small assault columns entering the city fared worse; the civilians beat them back, killing more than 200 in the space of minutes. When the officers told him that further progress must be on a house-by-house basis, Lannes delayed any assaults until the engineers exploded their mines.

General André-Bruno Lacoste, commanding the engineers, was killed that same day; Colonel Rogniat immediately took over the mining and engineering operations. He cut the amount of powder in the charges until it was just enough to leave outer walls and roofs intact to cover the assault troops. The defenders responded by spreading tar on walls and floors, and the last person out of each house set it afire. The conflagration slowed the French down, though it did not stop them, and covered everything with a pall of dense, stinking smoke. [31]

French and Spanish now fought underground in cellars and passageways, often buried together under the rubble when the mines blew. The house-to-house

fighting continued without respite and reached a new level of ferocity. Based on the statistics given by engineers and troops, Lannes figured it took a day to destroy a block of five or six houses, then another day to secure the ruins. At that rate, the capture of Saragossa seemed very far off. He knew the fighting progressed now not only from house to house but also from floor to floor and room to room. He was losing men at every corner, in each doorway, and from all the windows and loopholes manned by the defenders. Rogniat remembered early February in the same harrowing light. "All these deadly combats, all this daily hand-to-hand fighting cost us officers, sappers, and our bravest soldiers without any progress to show for it. . . . The troops say they're barely masters of a quarter of the city and are completely exhausted!" Shortly afterward Rogniat was wounded—the life of an engineer at Saragossa was a particularly chancy affair—and General Nicolas Haxo succeeded him until he too became one of the many casualties.[32]

Typhus, a traditional part of sieges, spread rapidly through the civilians and drove them into damp, crowded cellars in abysmally unsanitary conditions. The disease spread to the regular garrison, claiming 300 to 400 lives a day. It did not spare Palafox, who spent the last sixteen days of the siege issuing orders from his bed. By the middle of February, the assault troops came face-to-face with the consequences of rampant disease among an exhausted and malnourished population. "The houses and courtyards we captured were so full of dead and decomposing bodies that it was like fighting in an open cemetery," General Louis-François Musnier wrote after a particularly horrible three days.[33]

Although the number of defenders decreased dramatically every day, so did the number of besiegers, as more and more troops staggered behind the lines to the inadequate field hospitals. Although the defenders would get no reinforcements, neither would the French. Lannes knew every depressing detail of their situation, and refused to mislead his troops with false promises. All over the siege works, day and night, he tried to be as encouraging as possible without lying, but he was no better off than his troops—as tired, hungry, dirty, and dispirited as they were, and equally as appalled at what they had to do. He also carried the additional stress of a commander's responsibility to set a positive example in a negative situation. Unofficial chronicler of Lannes's good and bad days at Saragossa, Lejeune remembered one of the marshal's attempts to raise morale, a story amazing for its incongruity. Explosions destroyed many religious paintings, most by Spain's greatest artists which filled the churches and convents, but some had been rescued. A group of soldiers salvaged a painting by Murillo depicting Jesus and Simon Peter at the Sea of Galilee. While Lejeune admired it as a work of art, Lannes told the soldiers that if they had the same faith as Simon Peter, they would take the city. Lejeune also said he quoted the appropriate passage from the Gospels to make his point. If, as a future soldier would claim, there are no atheists in foxholes, it is equally true there were none in Saragossa.[34]

The convents of Jésus and San Lorenzo finally fell, but before the French could take advantage of this headway, Lannes heard that Palafox's two brothers, the marquis de Lazan and Francisco Palafox, had gathered 4,000 Catalonians and a number of armed peasants and were less than twenty miles away. He went out

to deal with this newest aggravation, taking General Jacques-Julien Guérin's infantry brigade division with him. The Palafox brothers took one look at these veterans and scurried off without firing a shot.[35]

On 10 February the artillery shelled the walls along Santa Engracía as mines with 3,000 pounds of powder under the San Francisco convent blew it to pieces. Spanish casualties were high: 300 regulars, a grenadier company, and 400 civilians making gunpowder in the convent perished. Several observers noted the explosion tossed dismembered limbs everywhere. Daily casualties were reaching 600, and the defenders had no time to bury them. Sometimes during a lull between shelling and assaults, they placed the corpses in shallow mass graves hastily dug in the churchyards. Constant artillery barrages directed against the churches scored direct hits on the graves, resulting in a sort of grisly exhumation. After that no one bothered to bury the dead.[36]

With the steady destruction of churches and convents, their treasures became fair game for assault troops fighting among the ruins. Soldiers used paintings as makeshift shelters from rain and cold in the spartan camps outside the walls. They stuffed pages of priceless medieval manuscripts and books into bedding, and built campfires with wooden statues and splintered rood-screens. Because survival was all that mattered now, the French soldiers no longer cared about desecrating religious relics. Their Polish comrades admired the pious paintings, allowed themselves a brief moment of reverent reflection, then followed the example of their less pious colleagues.[37]

During the next few days, small groups of foreign troops deserted Saragossa. The officers told Lannes that Palafox and his monks were clearly mad to continue the resistance, and they felt they were lucky to escape while they could. A large number of peasant families who had taken shelter in Saragossa in December now decided they preferred to surrender to the French rather than face death from disease and starvation, and would rather be shot than return to the city. Lannes listened to their horror stories, then ordered them all fed. After their first real meal in days, he had each peasant given two loaves of bread and two francs, and sent them back with instructions to tell the defenders that he had plenty of provisions and a generous disposition which he would show to them if they would just surrender.[38]

Lannes knew he had to make Palafox see that resistance was hopeless and, although house-by-house fighting might slow the French, it would not stop them. He thought if he took the northern suburb of San Lázaro at the same time he launched a major offensive against the city's center he would get Palafox's attention. On 18 February, Gazan's division stormed San Lázaro after fifty-two siege guns shattered its walls, captured the suburb, cut off all lines of retreat, then rounded up the garrison's 1,500 men as they tried to escape. General Charles-Louis Grandjean launched a simultaneous offensive after a mine destroyed part of the heavily defended University area. When Grandjean's infantry streamed in, the defenders crowded into the city's center and abandoned the entire eastern perimeter. The miners laid half a dozen huge charges under the Coso, marking the location on their maps.[39]

Lannes now controlled the northern and eastern sections of Saragossa. He

knew the defenders had jammed together around the Coso, running low on ammunition, the only operational batteries at the Sancho and Portillo gates. It seemed only a matter of days, and few at that. On February 19 he sent his aide Saint-Mars to deliver another message outlining the grim situation to Palafox. Blindfolded, taunted by smaller but no less vicious crowds, pelted with stones, Saint-Mars wondered if this time he would make it back to safety.[40]

Still confined to bed and surrounded by his clerical advisors like so many ravens, Palafox also was running out of time and options. His pride and the monks' intransigence forced him to play for time. Palafox sent Saint-Mars back, unmolested, with his insistence on a three-day truce to confirm the situation was really as bad as the message described. He also sent demands that any surrender terms be the same as Lannes had offered a month ago, with the stipulation that his garrison would march out with full honors of war to join the nearest Spanish field army. Palafox was not done; he again inferred that Lannes was lying about Saragossa in particular and Spain in general. Lannes was too worn down to fire a verbal salvo over the enemy's head. He responded immediately, a few terse sentences sufficient to his purpose. "Your proposals are absurd under the circumstances. I'm a man of honor and, when I tell you something, I expect you to accept my word as sacred. All the Spanish armies are destroyed, and the king [Joseph] is in Madrid with many Spanish regiments in his service."[41]

Defeated, too ill to handle the negotiations, or perhaps reluctant to face the marshal he had offended, Palafox turned over command to General Saint-March and appointed a thirty-three-member junta to discuss surrender terms. Led by Don Pedro María Ric, president of the Aragonese *audencia*, the junta met during all night on the 19th. The next morning a delegation left Saragossa under a flag of truce and was escorted to Lannes's headquarters at Maison Blanche.

As soon as they began speaking the marshal saw these Aragonese grandees were as haughty and unrealistic as Palafox. They demanded the French acknowledge Ferdinand as king of Spain, and insisted on the full honors of war for the garrison. Lannes kept his temper, though Ric thought he was as haughty as any Spaniard; he said the marshal received the junta with "extraordinary gravity," surrounded by his generals and other officers, and appeared alternately indifferent and scornful as the junta presented its terms. Lannes spoke only to Ric, blaming him for Palafox's obduracy, but Ric claimed because the junta had only been formed the previous evening, it was not responsible. When Lannes told him the negotiations were concluded, Ric argued they had not even begun. While the other members swore they would go on fighting unless their terms were met, Lannes dictated his version of the capitulation to a secretary, then handed them the map of the mines under the Coso. One of the delegates recognized his own house, sitting on the top of one of those mines. He complained, wrung his hands in despair, then gave up. The rest followed his example and signed the capitulation. Ric later recalled that he had been caught, from first to last, between Palafox's obstinacy and Lannes's scorn.[42]

Lannes could have forced Palafox to accept much harsher terms, exacting severe retribution for the hardships and casualties his troops had suffered. He could have made them pay for their treason against Joseph as king of Spain,

though he did not much care about that point. He *did* care about Palafox's caustic slights against his personal honor. Early in his career he had been merciless toward his enemies, but he was not merciless now. He had admired the stubborn heroism of Saragossa's defenders as he made the painful decision to defeat them by whatever means he could. They were still the enemy, but he did not hate them, and reserved any retribution for the very few who deserved it.[43]

The garrison presented an incongruous sight as it marched out from the Portillo Gate and laid down its arms. Faces blackened from powder, bodies gaunt with fatigue and disease, uniforms shredded and filthy, they were proud of their valor. The civilians were no less proud, for their fierce, sustained resistance was unprecedented in the history of modern sieges. Among the weary defenders were a group of young men with an air of studied nonchalance, smoking cigarettes and laughing with each other as if nothing unusual had occurred for the past two months. Regardless of their outward demeanor, these defenders passed out of the gates of their ruined city into legend.[44]

Reviewing the garrison and remaining civilians, Lannes did not think he had any reason to be proud. Standing with his staff who, with all other French soldiers present, had tried to eradicate the signs of the past fifty-two days, at least from their uniforms, Lannes said nothing except a quiet reminder to his troops to stand straight, and nothing at all to the Spanish. He had done what Napoleon had ordered, as expeditiously as possible, even though he had hated every minute of it, and the unrelenting horror had scarred him. He had lost 3,000 men through assaults and street-fighting and five times that number to disease. Saragossa was filled with 50,000 corpses, buried or left where they had fallen.[45]

That night Lannes told Napoleon what it was like. "Saragossa is in chaos, dreadful to see—corpses everywhere, most of the houses leveled, at least two-thirds of the city destroyed. . . . Its surrender should affect the rest of Spain, because everyone believed it couldn't be taken and Notre-Dame del Pilar would save it. I'd like to return to France; my health is completely ruined." He sent his aide, Colonel Charles Guéhénuec, to Paris with the news of Saragossa's capitulation. The aide delivered the dispatches to the minister of war, Henri-Jacques Clarke, and *Le Moniteur*. On 1 March, the newspaper placed a small article on the front page to inform its readers that "[Saragossa] has been heavily under siege only since 25 January, and it surrendered on 19 February. Just twenty-five days were required to force it open. The journal of the siege and other details of this important event are very lengthy and will be published tomorrow." True to its promise, the paper ran page after page of the harrowing events of the siege for Parisians to enjoy with their morning chocolate.[46]

In the aftermath of the vicious siege, critics arose from the ashes, looking for someone to blame. As the author of their destruction, Lannes was the obvious choice. The ubiquitous "they" said he flagrantly violated several articles of the capitulation. "They" said he allowed soldiers to rob the citizens, engage in rampant looting, desecrate churches, and brutally murder priests and monks on his direct orders. "They" accused him of treating Palafox with singular harshness in spite of his illness and his status as prisoner of war. "They" said he stole 4 millions' worth of jeweled treasures from the damaged basilica of Nuestra Señora

del Pilar.[47]

With regard to looting, Lannes had issued explicit orders on the subject, always necessary in such circumstances. "Pillaging is dishonorable," he decreed, "and endangers our enemies and ourselves. Any of you who commits the slightest offense will be arrested, court-martialed, and shot." He meant it, and had several soldiers publicly executed for their disobedience. Though he issued the orders and within limits could enforce them by posting guards at the gates and at major points throughout the city, he could not prevent all looting. Surrounded by abandoned houses and churches, soldiers worn down by the siege could scarcely resist helping themselves to what they viewed as spoils of war.[48]

Lannes had known from his first abortive encounter with Palafox that his advisors, Don Basilio and Don Santiago Sas, had led the civilian defense and pressured Palafox to continue past any reasonable hope of success. He also knew several monks had ordered—or personally committed—atrocities against wounded and captured French soldiers. He therefore blamed the two monks as much for Saragossa's casualties as the assaults and mines he had ordered. Don Basilio, the "evil genius of insurrection," was captured trying to escape during the night of 23 February. He was afraid to die, and offered gold—a *lot* of gold—to his captors if they would let him live. Unmoved by his bribes, the soldiers killed him with their bayonets like a rabid dog and threw his body in the Ebro. Lannes did not care about Don Basilio's end, and in a letter to Napoleon referred to the monks as instigators of lies and brutality. Another soldier was less charitable. He said Don Basilio in particular had routinely tortured and mutilated his prisoners, especially Polish and Italian soldiers, and had exhibited their bodies on the ramparts.[49]

Lannes had sent his Spanish aide, the young Marquis Serafino de Albuquerque, to ask for Palafox's sword, thinking the unpleasant demand might come easier from another Spaniard. Marbot claimed that the aide was terrified of the ailing Palafox because Serafino's father, the duke de Albuquerque, had once been his close friend. Though Lannes intended to treat Palafox as a prisoner of war, Napoleon overruled him, ordering him to be held as "a prisoner of the state" because he had been a "dedicated leader of insurgents." Regardless of the classification, Lannes had little reason to worry about Palafox's well-being, and no reason at all when he found a collection of French officers' uniforms, decorations, and swords in his house. He let him remain under guard—and out of his sight—until he recovered from his illness, then sent him to Bayonne. Palafox was taken from there to Vincennes, where he remained a prisoner until 1814. Casamayor and Alcaide Ibieca, both of whom were still in Saragossa and who had no good thoughts to spare for their conquerors, admitted they saw no evidence of mistreatment. With even less reason for charity, Ric later confirmed the fact that while Lannes was willing to let Palafox leave the city, he was prevented only by the emperor's orders.[50]

Equally interesting—and controversial—is the story of the Pilar diamonds. Madame Junot, who of course was nowhere near Spain and relied on her husband's version of events, wrote that in the climate of fear lingering after the capitulation, a delegation attempted to bribe the French. Because there was not

much of value left in Saragossa, they offered diamonds from the Pilar basilica to Lannes, Junot, and Mortier. They refused, and the treasure was restored to the basilica. Madame Junot claimed that Lannes changed his mind, took the diamonds to Paris, and gave them to Napoleon, who insisted the marshal had earned them. On the other hand, Don Pedro Maria Ric said the diamonds had been offered to the French governor of Saragossa, General Anne-Gilbert Laval, as payment to senior officers. When the citizens of Saragossa protested the desecration of the Pilar diamonds and Laval would not accept them, Ric claimed that Lannes confiscated the treasure and kept it under guard. As far as he knew, the diamonds remained when Lannes returned to France.[51]

One of the most unpleasant orders Lannes had to give, at Napoleon's insistence, concerned the "solemn entry" of the victors into Saragossa. No one, including the marshal, felt up to a formal parade in full dress uniform through the devastation and still smoldering debris. "It's a dreadful place to see," he said, "and I don't know how it will ever recover." Regardless of the victors' reluctance and the resentment of the vanquished, it had to be done. He ordered a Solemn Mass and Te Deum in the ruined Pilar basilica and required surviving clergy, civil officials, and notables to attend. He excused none of his staff nor any of the senior officers. Apparently still annoyed with Lannes, Junot refused to go.[52]

It must have been a solemn and intensely religious occasion, as Spanish services usually were, but the surroundings and the circumstances held little of thanksgiving—unless one were simply glad to still be alive. For the majority of his life, Lannes had been an outspoken and frequently crude critic of religion, and he was generally irreverent whenever he was forced to attend Mass, as Napoleon certainly had reason to know. During this service, sitting with Mortier to the left of the high altar, Junot's empty chair between them, he was ominously quiet and oddly respectful.[53]

A Paris newspaper reported the event in details worthy of a tabloid press; the editors clearly saw it as an opportunity to glorify the French presence in Spain at the expense of truth. Had Lannes read this op-ed piece he would have been appalled, then convinced the events so described had occurred on another planet with actors he did not know. "The streets [of Saragossa] were all hung with tapestries," the article claimed, "and the people at their windows expressed both joy and surprise in the rapid improvement in their circumstances—they shouted *Vive l'Empereur* as the bands playing added to the exhilaration." After more than two months of constant bombardment, exploding mines, and related destruction, Lannes knew not much of the city still stood, with few tapestries left to decorate the ruins. The citizens who had watched his "triumphal entry" into the city did not express joy, nor did they acclaim the emperor unless a French bayonet forced them into it. He admitted as much to Louise: "They didn't return in any way the generosity I showed to them."[54]

After a Te Deum and the dinner Lannes hosted that evening in one of the grandee's houses least damaged during the siege, "the day ended amid public joy and general satisfaction," the article reported. Because the dinner also allegedly included toasts to Napoleon and every member of the Bonaparte clan, accompanied by an amazing—and improbable—number of cannon salvos, it is

more likely the public cowered in its houses expressing fear, not joy. In any case, Lannes would not have used his artillery in such a manner—like the citizens of Saragossa, he had heard enough cannons for a lifetime. The article concluded by stating, "Yesterday's ceremonies successfully won over the most obstinate of souls, and soon Aragón will be the most submissive of all Spanish provinces." Lannes knew this was a spurious claim as well. He had destroyed a city, but not the convictions of its inhabitants; he knew better than anyone that he had not converted a soul to the French cause. Aragon's imminent submission would be somebody else's problem—he was going home.[55]

During what would be a very brief respite in Paris, Lannes met a man who had read about the siege in the newspapers and congratulated him on his victory. "A triumph of reason over fanaticism; Voltaire would have applauded your efforts to separate such people from their repressive monasticism," the gentleman said. Lannes had never read Voltaire in his life and was not pleased with the flattery. "Say whatever you want, but they were terrific fighters, those monks," he replied. Though the name *Saragosse* would be engraved on the walls of his tomb in the Panthéon crypts, it is questionable whether he ever considered it a victory.[56]

NOTES

1. Steiger, *Goethes Leben*, V, 246–47; Lannes, *Maréchal Lannes*, 124. The Situations for the first two weeks in November, as well as the Itineraries for the Armée d'Espagne, show that the imperial headquarters were in a different place almost every day. They also list Lannes as part of Napoleon's état-major. See Service historique, Situations: Armée d'Espagne, 1–15 November 1808, Carton C^8 349; Itinéraires et emplacements, November and December 1808, Carton C^8 383; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 14408, Napoleon to Clarke, 25 October 1808, XVIII, 20–21. Méneval noted that Lannes had been "recovering from a long illness," and had met Napoleon across the Pyrenees, accompanying the emperor on virtually every subsequent stage of his journey until they both reached Valladolid in January 1809. The mysterious "long illness" was actually the one that occurred in 1807. Méneval, *Mémoires*, II, 197.

2. Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 243; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 58.

3. The talented doctor used a variety of methods, some standard and others definitely more arcane, to get the marshal off the endangered list. Larrey noted that while five days was not sufficient time for even a minimal recovery, Lannes insisted on riding off in a hurry to rejoin Napoleon. Evidently he had learned nothing useful from his accident. Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 244–46; Service historique, Situations: Armée d'Espagne, November 1808, Carton C^8 349.

4. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 226; Pierre-Louis Roederer, *Autour de Bonaparte* (Paris, 1909), 249.

5. Although Marbot later included an abridged version of this incident in his memoirs, he originally related it to General Jean-Jacques Pelet, who was Masséna's chief-of-staff in the 1809 campaign in Austria and therefore had plenty of opportunity to observe Lannes then. Pelet wrote down what Marbot told him, and later, when he was in charge of the Dépôt de la guerre, he placed his account in Lannes's dossier, an as example of good advice taken and acted on. See Service historique, dossier du maréchal Lannes, Carton MF^2 10; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 224.

6. Commandant Dominique-Eugène Balagny, *Campagne de l'Empereur Napoléon en Espagne 1808–1809*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1902–6), I, 85–86.

7. Service historique, Situations: Armée d'Espagne, November 1808, Carton C^2 349; Heinrich von Brandt, *Souvenirs d'un officier polonaise. Scènes de la vie militaire en Espagne et en Russie 1808–1812* (Paris, 1877), 18.

8. Lannes to Napoleon, 22 November 1808, quoted in Balagny, *Campagne en Espagne*, II, 296–97.

9. Charles Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1902), I, 435, 440–43. For much of the details about the Tudela campaign, Oman relied on the diary of British General Charles Graham, who was an observer with Castaños's army. Napoleon ordered Ney to either cut Castaños's retreat or take Soria, whichever seemed to be the best course at the time. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 14489, Napoleon to Bessières, 18 November 1808, XVIII, 80–81.

10. Jean-Jacques Belmas, *Journaux des siéges fait ou soutenus par les français dans la péninsule de 1808 à 1814*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1836–37), I, 39–41.

11. Von Brandt, *Souvenirs*, 16–18; W. F. Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula 1807–1814*, 6 vols. (London, 1851), II, 167. Oman said that La Peña should have been shot for cowardice in allowing himself to be intimidated by two dragoon brigades. He also castigated Lannes for not fully exploiting the gap between La Peña and O'Neille, and for wasting too much time in frontal assaults instead of heading for the exposed flanks. Like Napier, Oman took a very dim view indeed of the Spanish abilities on the battlefield. Oman, *Peninsular War*, I, 445. Oman also reported that Lannes returned to France after Tudela, remaining there nearly two months until he recovered enough to take command of the siege operations at Saragossa the end of January. Various eyewitnesses, the Situations for the Armée d'Espagne during December and January, and Lannes's own correspondence prove him wrong. Oman, *Peninsular War*, II, 91.

12. Archives nationales, AF IV, dossier 1622, "Affaires d'Espagne," plaquette 1^I, Lannes to Napoleon, 28 and 29 November 1808.

13. Service historique, Situations: Armée d'Espagne, 1–10 December 1808, Carton C^8 349. For a graphic description of the conditions and the dangers of the Guadarrama crossing, see Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 250–52; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 86.

14. Charles Richard Vaughan, *Viaje por España 1808*, trans. Manuel Rodrigo Alonso. (Madrid, 1987), 180–81, 211–12. Vaughan was a young English officer who admired Palafox so much that he volunteered to serve under him during the first siege.

15. Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 139–40. Belmas put the number of effective Spanish defenders at close to 60,000. This is clearly an exaggeration, but perhaps Belmas was suitably impressed with the feverish and unrelenting activity by both regular troops and the civilian population that made Saragossa seem full of defenders, which it actually was.

16. For the preparations for the second siege, see Augustín Alcaide Ibieca, *Historia de los sitios que pusieron a Zaragoza en los años 1808 y 1809 las tropas de Napoleón*, 3 vols. (Madrid, 1830–31), II, 68–70, 74. Alcaide Ibieca participated in both sieges, and his accounts, although understandably prejudiced, are valuable and extremely detailed; Casamayor, *Diario de los sitios de Zaragoza*, ed. José Valenzuela la Rosa (Zaragoza, 1908), 33–36; Count José María Toreno, *Historia del levantamiento, guerra y revolución de España* (Madrid, 1926), 166–67.

17. Berthier said that Napoleon believed the 3rd Corps was sufficient to besiege Saragossa. Berthier to Moncey, 8 December 1808, quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, I, 350–51. See also *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 14539, Napoleon to Berthier, 8 December 1808, XVIII, 122; No. 14579, Napoleon to Berthier, 17 December 1808, XVIII, 152; Moncey to Palafox, 22 December 1808; Palafox to Moncey, 22 December 1808,

quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 352–55; Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Espagne, Berthier to Junot, 27 December 1808, Carton C^8 221.

18. Service historique, dossier du maréchal Lannes, Carton MF^2 10. There were two separate orders, one dated 9 January and the other dated the 20th. Both say the same thing. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 239–40.

19. Archives nationales, AF IV, Carton 1622, plaquette 1^1, Lannes to Junot, 9 January 1809. Lannes addressed Junot in the familiar form, as an old friend, and concluded his letter "Je n'ai pas besoin de te dire le plaisir que j'aurai de t'embrasser." D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, III, 139–40; Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 128–29.

20. A twentieth-century French historian of the Iberian campaign was positively lyrical about the effect the new commander had on the siege operations: "The situation completely changed. [The marshal was] astute, positive, clear-headed, an enemy of words, straight, generous and willing. He had known the worst days and was proud of having gotten through them unscathed; he had military valor of the first rank, brilliance unsurpassed, surrounded by a kind of radiance; perhaps the best of the emperor's lieutenants. Unselfish, invincible, esteemed by his troops. . . . All these qualities were his trump cards in the game, and they gave him all the assurance he would ever need." Charles Alexander Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *L'Espagne et Napoléon*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1908–1931), II, 44. On the other hand, Oman said Lannes arrived at Saragossa "restored to health by two months' holiday." Lannes would scarcely have considered his arduous trek through northern Spain in deep winter as much of a vacation. Oman, *Peninsular War*, II, 119. Both Lejeune and Belmas used virtually the same phrase to describe Lannes. Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 130; Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 205; Joseph Bonaparte, *Mémoires et correspondance*, Joseph to Napoleon, 22 February 1809, VI, 64.

21. Joseph Bonaparte, *Mémoires et correspondance*, V, 402–3. Before the first siege, this inn had evidently been quite elegant. The locals called it *Casablanca*, and the French translated the name literally when they appropriated it. Don Pedro María Ric, *Mémoire sur le deuxième siège de Saragossa*. Collection complementaire des Mémoires relatifs à la Révolution française (Paris, 1823), 183; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 104.

22. Poussereau, *L'histoire*, 285.

23. Lannes to Palafox, 24 January 1809, quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 381–82. Lejeune mentioned that although the majority of the crowds were calling for blood, one or two observant souls commented that Saint-Mars was so good-looking that it would be a shame to kill him. Casamayor's comments were more laconic; he stated simply that the blindfolded officer carried Palafox's letter which rejected all the French demands. See Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 131–33; Casamayor, *Diario*, 186.

24. Palafox to Lannes, 24 January 1809, quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 382, and in Alcaide Ibieca, *Historia de los sitios*, I, 126–27.

25. For a detailed description of the fighting on these two days, see report of General Pierre-Joseph Habert, 27–28 January 1809; report of General Jean-Antoine Brun, 27 January 1809; and Lacoste to Junot, 28 January 1809, all quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 383–87. According to Casamayor, the French simply overwhelmed the defenders. "Although they suffered many casualties, [we] still could not resist them. . . . Their artillery was too plentiful, and their troops too numerous—we had too little to counter them with, and we had just lost the Palafox battery." Casamayor, *Diario*, 213. Ric noted that the bombardment was so intense that the clergy had to suspend their daily masses. Ric, *Mémoire*, 155. Von Brandt's Polish regiment participated in virtually all the assaults during these two days, and his description of the fighting is no less harrowing than Casamayor's. Von Brandt, *Souvenirs*, 38; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 254.

26. Palafox's proclamation to the defenders, 28 January 1809, quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 388–91, and in Alcaide Ibieca, *Historia de los sitios*, II, 146–48. See also Casamayor, *Diario*, 197.

27. Alcaide Ibieca, *Historia de los sitios*, II, 155.

28. Archives nationales, AF IV, Carton 1622, plaquette 1^{1}, Lannes to Berthier, 30 January 1809; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 251.

29. Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 144–45.

30. Order of the Day, 3 February 1809, quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 399; Von Brandt, *Souvenirs*, 46.

31. Baron Joseph Rogniat, *Relation des siéges de Saragosse et de Tortone par les français dans la dernière guerre d'Espagne* (Paris, 1814), 26.

32. Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 251–52; Rogniat, *Relation des siéges*, 31–32, 38.

33. Musnier's report of 11 February 1809, quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 404–6.

34. Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 176; Thoumas, *Lannes*, 254.

35. Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 293; Oman, *Peninsular War*, II, 131.

36. General Musnier's report of 11 February 1809, quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 404–6; Casamayor, *Diario*, 227–28.

37. Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 175–76.

38. Lejeune described this incident with his usual flair, and compared Lannes's charity toward the peasants with that of Henri IV. Lejeune might have stretched the analogy somewhat, and Lannes's generosity toward the peasants was certainly a mixed blessing. He fed them, it is true, but he did send them back to Saragossa, where he had to realize that their chances for survival were diminished. He could not know with any degree of certainty what impact their message might have on the defenders, but by this time, he was running out of options. Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 177.

39. Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 309–315.

40. Lejeune, *Memoirs*, II, 196.

41. Ric, *Mémoire*, 164. Ric said that a three-day truce was absolutely essential for any subsequent negotiations. Although the junta that Palafox organized could not agree on many points, they were agreed on this one. Archives nationales, AF IV, Carton 1622, plaquette 1^{1}, Lannes to Palafox, 19 February 1809.

42. Ric, *Mémoire*, 171–73; Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 198; Alcaide Ibieca, *Historia de los sitios*, I, 219–21; Toreno, *Historia del levantamiento*, 271; Ric, *Mémoire*, 174.

43. The text of the surrender is as follows:

"The surrender of the city of Saragossa, 20 February 1809. The junta of Saragossa . . . presented themselves on 20 February at 4:00 p.m. at the headquarters of Son Excellence Monseigneur le maréchal duc de Montebello to surrender to him the city of Saragossa. The marshal had always made his intentions very clear, and those were to save this city. Consequently, he grants, in the name of His Imperial Majesty the emperor Napoleon and in the name of His Majesty King Joseph-Napoleon, a general pardon to all the inhabitants of Saragossa, under the following conditions:

Article 1: The garrison of Saragossa will march out with all their arms at noon on 21 February by the Portillo Gate, and will leave their arms 100 paces from the gate.

Article 2: All the officers and soldiers of Spanish forces shall take an oath of loyalty to His Catholic Majesty King Joseph-Napoleon I.

Article 3: All Spanish officers and soldiers who swear the oath of loyalty are free to enter the service of His Catholic Majesty.

Article 4: Those [officers and soldiers] who do not wish to serve will be taken as prisoners of war to France.

Article 5: All inhabitants of Saragossa and all foreigners, if there are any, shall go to the Portillo Gate and be disarmed there by the mayor tomorrow at noon.

Article 6: Persons and property shall be respected by the troops of His Majesty the emperor.

Article 7: The religion [of Saragossa] and its priests shall be respected. Guards will be stationed by the principal churches.

Article 8: French troops will hold all gates of the city, the castle [Aljafería] and the Coso.

Article 9: All artillery and munitions of whatever kind shall be turned over tomorrow at noon.

Article 10: All military and civil funds shall be placed at the disposal of His Catholic Majesty.

Article 11: All civil administrators and other officials shall take the oath of loyalty to His Catholic Majesty. There shall be equal justice, in the name of His Catholic Majesty." Archives nationales, AF IV, Carton 1622, plaquette 1^{1}, capitulation of Saragossa, 20 February 1809.

44. Von Brandt, *Souvenirs*, 41–42; Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 321–22.

45. Von Brandt commented that Lannes was never one to give pointless speeches in any case. Von Brandt, *Souvenirs*, 41. Casualty figures for both sides are difficult to assess accurately. Contemporary French sources agree that Lannes had 3,000 killed in the actual siege, but at least twice that number died from disease. Of the engineers who bore the brunt of the siege operations, twenty-seven officers were wounded, and eleven died from their wounds. Lannes reported to Berthier that there were 50,000 dead in Saragossa: 20,000 regular troops and 30,000 civilians. Among them, he said that the French killed only 6,000 to 7,000; the rest died from disease and starvation. See Lannes to Berthier, 27 February 1809, quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 327; Joseph Bonaparte, *Mémoires et correspondance*, V, 414; Toreno, *Historia del levantamiento*, 172.

46. Archives nationales, AF IV, dossier 1622, plaquette 1^{1}, Lannes to Napoleon, 20 February 1809; *Le Moniteur*, No. 60, Wednesday, 1 March 1809, 233.

47. Most of the criticism originated from Toreno, who castigated the French for their summary execution of the two monks, Basilio and Sas, their rampant pillaging, and other similar actions in the days following the capitulation. Toreno, *Historia del levantamiento*, 171; Ric, *Mémoire*, 174–77, 183–84; D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, III, 141–42.

48. Archives nationales, AF IV, dossier 1622, plaquette 1^{1}, Order of 21 February 1809. Von Brandt said that even though guards were posted at all the gates of the city, the soldiers knew how to circumvent them. They were quite familiar with the narrow streets, and even in the midst of the devastation, many soldiers went on frequent "promenades" through these streets, and never returned empty-handed. Von Brandt, *Souvenirs*, 42.

49. Archives nationales, AF IV, dossier 1622, plaquette 1^{1}, Lannes to Napoleon, 25 February 1809, François-Frédéric Billon, *Souvenirs d'un vélite de la Garde sous Napoléon Ier* (Paris, 1905), 157–58.

50. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 109.

51. Ric, *Mémoire*, 174–77, 183–84; D'Abrantès, *Memoirs*, III, 141–42.

52. Lannes to Berthier, 27 February 1809, quoted in Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 420–22; Archives nationales, AF IV, dossier 1622, plaquette 1^{1}, Lannes to Joseph Bonaparte, 25 February 1809; Belmas, *Journaux des siéges*, II, 325.

53. Von Brandt recalled that the solemnity of the occasion was disrupted by an ignorance of custom. Traditional in French military masses, drum-rolls rather than bells signaled the Elevation of the Host, and following this custom in the Pilar basilica made the Spanish congregation think it was the signal for a massacre. Only the sight of Lannes and Mortier kneeling before the high altar reassured them. Von Brandt, *Souvenirs*, 48.

54. Thoumas, *Lannes*, 267–68; *Journal de l'Empire*, 15 March 1809.

55. *Journal de l'Empire*, 15 March 1809.

56. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *L'Espagne*, II, 64.

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Chapter 10

Until the Last One's Gone: Essling, 1809

I've got a really bad feeling about this.
—Lannes to Joséphine and Doctor Lanefranque

A latter-day Roland, Lannes rode through the passes at Roncesvalles a different person than he had been five months before. He could not seem to shake his bone-deep weariness and even deeper uneasiness—something had happened to him in the Pilar basilica he did not understand, and the memory of it kept him unusually quiet during the first part of the journey. Traveling with several of his aides and in no particular hurry to reach Paris, he stopped in Lectoure for two days. In addition to the usual official welcoming delegation of mayor and *sous-préfect*, the townspeople seemed genuinely delighted to see him. There was one unusual aspect of this visit that surprised the locals. On the evening of Maundy Thursday, he went to all the churches in town—there were four, including the Carmelite convent—and left generous donations at each. He stopped last at the small private chapel of the hospital occupying the chateau of a long-departed émigré. Surprised by his illustrious and completely unexpected guest, the priest who said Mass that night was more astonished by the marshal's uncharacteristic reverence. The aides were not surprised; the memories of Saragossa lay heavy on their minds as well.[1]

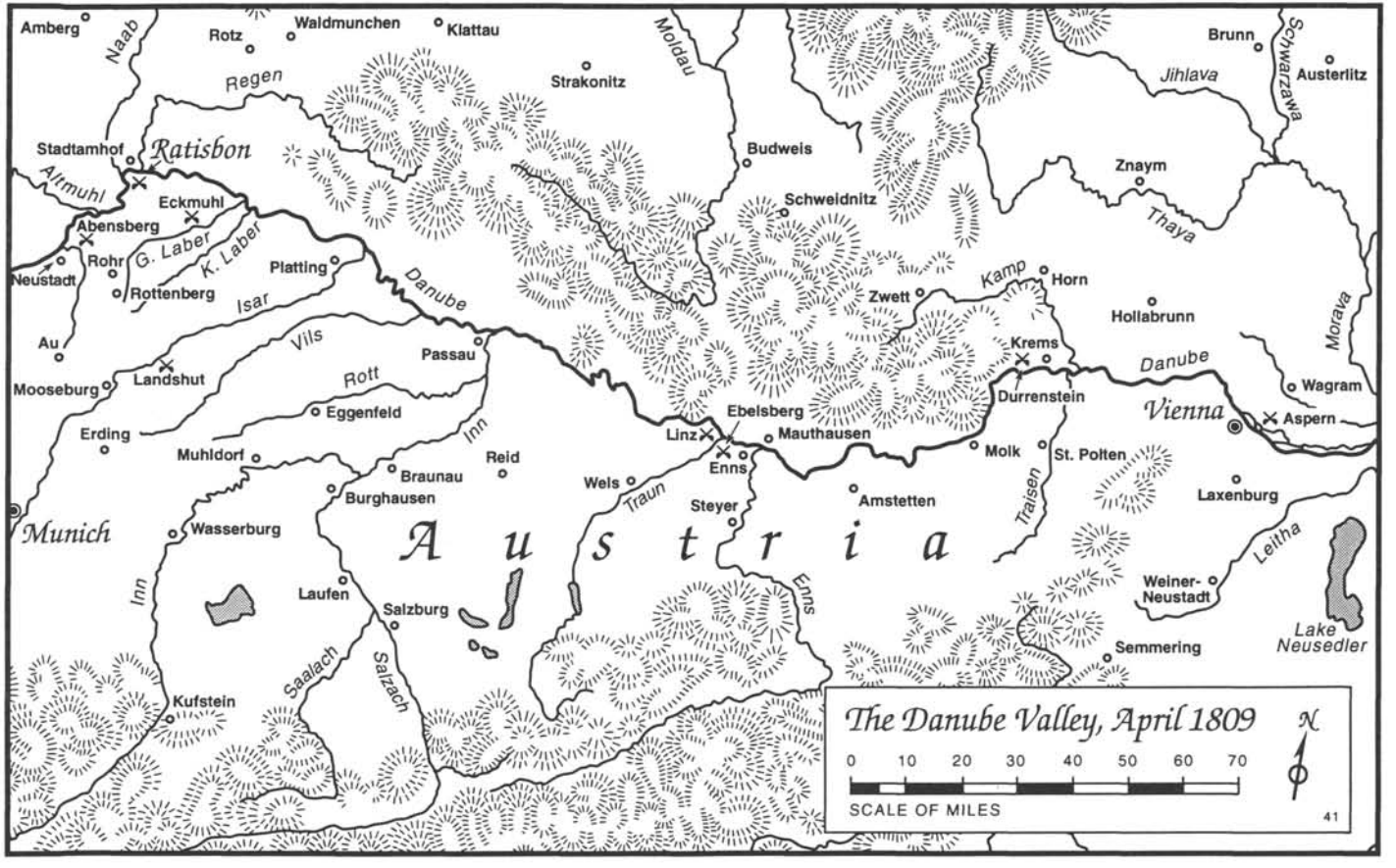
They left Lectoure the next day, Good Friday, and headed north. Marbot recalled that traveling with Lannes was usually a mixed blessing. Carriages instead of horseback should have been more comfortable, but it was not. Lannes would not let his aides eat or drink in his carriage—he said it made him sick, and he did not want them tossing chicken bones out the windows. Marbot also said Lannes usually refused to stop for any reason until his aides insisted that he would not appreciate the alternative. They did stop once for several hours before reaching Paris, although the aides wondered at the choice of such an out-of-the-way posthouse in the Dordogne. The inn's owner was the captain, now long

retired, who had rescued Lannes at Saint-Jean-d'Acre. Gratitude being one of his finer qualities—usually—Lannes had paid his debt with enough money to buy the inn. The two had not seen each other for several years; Marbot said the reunion was quite touching.[2]

Taking advantage of Napoleon's involvement in Spain, Austria had declared war. This latest example of Habsburg presumption did not catch Napoleon by surprise. He had already drafted preliminary orders for the Armée d'Allemagne at the beginning of March, just in case. When he had fine-tuned the army's organization to suit him, he left Paris on 31 March, his presence demanded by every corps commander in the field who had fretted under Berthier's mismanagement for more than two weeks.[3]

When he reached Paris on 9 April, Lannes found his orders waiting. He did not know that Napoleon had debated whether to leave him in Spain and assign the 2nd Corps to Bernadotte so he might do something useful, for once. As much as he had hated Spain, it may have been better for him and the future of the Peninsula had the emperor's coin toss landed in favor of Bernadotte going against the Habsburgs. Lannes would have almost no time to spend with his family at Maisons, but he delayed his departure as long as he reasonably could. He visited the Empress Joséphine the evening before he left, because Napoleon had already been gone for two weeks. It was a formal visit, required by court and military protocol, but it was an odd one. The soldier who Joséphine had known since 1797, who had once told Napoleon he should have married a much younger woman, was so unusually subdued that she asked what was wrong. He seemed reluctant to answer, but she persisted. "I've got a really bad feeling [about this campaign], and I don't want to leave my family." Discussing him after he had gone, the empress and her attendant, Mademoiselle Marie-Jeanne Avrillion, decided Lannes was a victim of presentiment. Mlle Avrillion later wrote that "in spite of his incomparable bravery, his audacity that vanquished all dangers, his usually calm challenging of death, Lannes's attitude about this campaign was markedly different from all the others in which he had willingly participated. Whether from presentiment or from some other reason, he obviously did not want to go." Another acquaintance met him in Paris before he left and wished him a speedy return. "I don't know if I'll come back," Lannes told him, "but if I do I'll just have to leave for somewhere else. It's the emperor's destiny to make war and it's mine to follow him until the end. We'll both die, whether it's now or later. I just wish we could be boys again."[4]

It took Lannes a week to reach Napoleon's headquarters outside Neustadt, and he arrived late at night on 19 April. He was tired, quiet, and melancholy—Napoleon noticed immediately. He tried to cheer him up with a banal barrage of pleasantries, but Lannes was having none of that. The emperor then tried reducing the larger goal of crushing the Habsburg dynasty to a personal level. "You'll accomplish great things," he announced, his arm around the marshal's shoulders. "Besides, who knows the way to Vienna better than you?" Oudinot knew the way, as well as half a dozen other military luminaries who Lannes could mention. Unmoved by Napoleon's flattery, he shrugged off the imperial embrace. "I'll do whatever you tell me," he said, then left for his tent and collapsed for the rest of a


Amberg
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Ratisbon
Budweis
Znaym
Altmuhl
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The Danube Valley, April 1809
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0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70
SCALE OF MILES
41

short night. Satisfied with obedience and ignoring such an uncharacteristic lack of enthusiasm, Napoleon dictated orders for the morning.[5]

Archduke Louis, never much of a threat, commanded the Austrian forces closest to the French. Attacking Louis would set Napoleon's plan to force the Archduke Charles's army across the Isar and back toward Vienna in motion. The emperor told Lannes to go after Louis and General Johann Hiller and keep them from reaching Ratisbon on the Danube. His 2nd Corps was nowhere near him, so Lannes assumed temporary command of two of Davout's divisions, Nansouty's cuirassiers, and General Charles-Claude Jacquinot's light cavalry.[6]

Morand's division left at dawn on the 20th and encountered forces commanded by General Ludwig Thierry sometime after eight. Having ridden ahead of Morand, Lannes joined Jacquinot's cavalry in pursuit of Thierry until Archduke Charles sent reinforcements. He halted just long enough for Lefebvre's Bavarian and Württemberger troops to arrive, then went back on the offensive. By the end of the afternoon, Louis had retired toward Landshut, and Archduke Charles moved north toward Ratisbon. The French captured between 3,000 and 4,000 prisoners, two flags, twelve guns, and a large amount of baggage, munitions, and other supplies abandoned by the retreating enemy. Lannes claimed fewer than 215 casualties, and advanced to Rottenburg for the night.[7]

Napoleon understood the importance of continuing the pursuit to Landshut, where Hiller held the town and covered the road to Ratisbon. Lannes got the job, and left before dawn on the 21st, taking Nansouty's cuirassiers, Morand's division, General Karl Philipp von Wrède's Bavarian division, and Vandamme's heavy cavalry with him. Just outside Rottenburg, Nansouty's cuirassiers ran into Hiller's rear-guard, repulsed them easily, then headed for Landshut. Napoleon joined Lannes by nine and complimented him on his actions the previous day at Abensberg. Riding with Morand's infantry, Lannes did not slow down for a chat. "If I'd gotten more reinforcements, we'd have taken a lot more prisoners," he said, and cantered off.[8]

The road to Landshut was choked with retreating Austrians who abandoned wagons, supplies, and wounded men. Morand caught up with Hiller outside Landshut and chased him into the suburbs. The bridge was already burning, but Lannes told the infantry to douse the flames and ordered Morand to follow the Austrians to the heights above Landshut. The enemy attempted to make a stand but the French stopped them, taking nearly 15,000 prisoners, plus abandoned bridging equipment, munitions, supplies, and several guns. With Landshut secure, the French crossed the Isar and bivouacked behind the town on the road to Ratisbon.[9]

Although Napoleon had achieved his immediate objective, he could not lessen the pressure on Archduke Charles, who had reached Eckmühl. He knew the enemy strength would be significant and wanted at least two corps ready to attack. Therefore, he ordered Lannes to reach Ergoldsbach by seven on the morning of 22 April, ready to advance to Eckmühl as soon as Davout joined him. Napoleon was right; Archduke Charles had 110,000 troops near Eckmühl, though not all were in position. Davout spearheaded the attack, assisted by Lefebvre's corps, and was responsible for its success. Lannes spent more time capturing fleeing

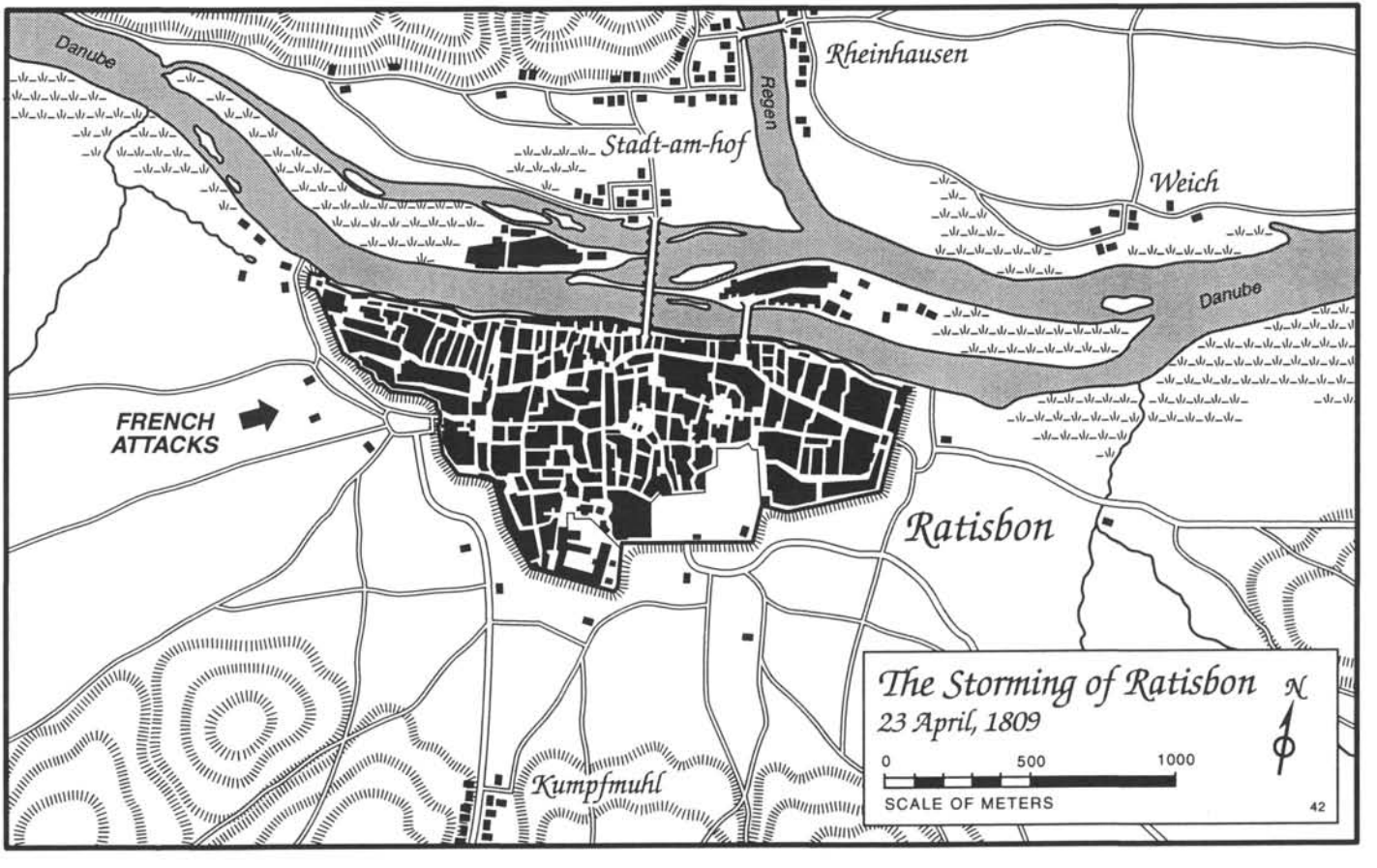
Austrians than actually fighting them. One of the casualties, however, was General Cervoni, Lannes's chief-of-staff and friend since the first Italian campaign. In the first hour or so of the battle, Cervoni had been looking at a map with Lannes when an Austrian cannonball struck and killed him instantly. Bothered by uncomfortable—and unfamiliar—twinges of presentiment, Lannes was visibly distraught by Cervoni's death, and spent the rest of the day silent and withdrawn while everyone else celebrated the victory.[10]

The hours after the battle were confusing for both sides. Troops wandered around in the dark looking for their regiments. Most Austrian prisoners were captured simply because they were lost, grew tired of searching for a way out, and surrendered to almost anybody, including one of Lannes's aides. Carrying a dispatch sometime after midnight, he ran into an Austrian colonel with the remains of his regiment. Frustrated, the colonel told him, "You're as much my prisoner as I'm yours—might as well go to your headquarters, because I've got no idea where I am." The aide led the Austrians to Lannes's headquarters and turned them over.[11]

Napoleon spent the night at the château of Alt-Egglofsheim with Lannes, Masséna, Berthier, and Lefebvre. Archduke Charles spent the night moving his troops, artillery, and baggage to Ratisbon, where he left some of his cavalry outside the walls and placed most of his infantry inside the city. Although Napoleon did not intend to let him cross the river and get away, the archduke apparently had no idea his position at Ratisbon was quite so vulnerable, and continued his almost leisurely deployments.[12]

Most of Davout's 3rd Corps had reached the heights above Ratisbon before dawn on 23 April, with Lefebvre's divisions to his right. Napoleon ordered General Charles Gudin's division, Nansouty's cuirassiers, and General Raymond Saint-Sulpice's cavalry toward the city. When the Austrian cavalry saw them coming, they galloped away, leaving the garrison to defend Ratisbon the best way it could. The garrison was not without help—Ratisbon's high medieval walls were surrounded by a dry moat, a steep counterscarp, and ramparts fortified with artillery and sharpshooters. Although the walls would not withstand siege guns, they were strong enough to stop frontal assaults. Napoleon had no time for a siege; he expected to take Ratisbon by storm in one day, in spite of the obstacles. The moat was the most formidable one, with sides so steep that assault troops would have to climb down on scaling ladders, cross under fire from the enemy sharpshooters, climb out with their ladders, cross the promenades, then scale the angled ramparts under an artillery cross-fire. In spite of such a daunting prospect, Napoleon ordered the advance-guard forward.[13]

The French infantry closed in on Ratisbon shortly before noon on 23 April. Gudin's division launched an assault on the walls, but it failed. Napoleon rode over to take a look, accompanied by Lannes, ordered the artillery to fire at one of the big gates in the walls, then returned to his headquarters. Lannes told Morand's infantry to wait behind a large farmhouse near one of the promenades until the artillery smashed a breach in the wall. When a breach failed to materialize after more than an hour of sustained bombardment, he directed the guns at a house against the ramparts by the Straubing Gate and blew it apart. Debris tumbled in


Danube
Rheinhausen
Regen
Stadt-am-hof
Weich
Danube
FRENCH
ATTACKS
Ratisbon
Kumpfmuhl
The Storming of Ratisbon
23 April, 1809
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SCALE OF METERS
42

the moat, making the incline manageable for assault troops, as Lannes intended. He asked for fifty volunteers from Morand's troops to lead the attack, and more than fifty volunteered. The Austrians opened fire as soon as they left the shelter of the farmhouse. Some of the volunteers reached the moat, where direct fire from the walls mowed them down. The few survivors crawled back to the safety of the farmhouse. Lannes asked for more volunteers and actually got them. The scene was repeated, with fewer survivors.[14]

Lannes refused to concede defeat. He knew the first two disastrous attempts had reduced the spirit of volunteerism to virtually nothing. He could order his troops to attack, but he understood the difference between the soldier who fights on command and the one who fights because he wants to. Because no one stepped forward when he asked—understandably so—Lannes unfastened his Légion d'Honneur cross and held it up as the reward those who volunteered would receive. Nearly a hundred men, including several officers, thought the impressive decoration was worth a gamble. Though he had never read Livy's account of the Punic Wars, Lannes had duplicated Hannibal's exhortations to his troops at Casilinum, including the reward of a mural crown to the first men over the walls. Unfortunately, this group got no further than the previous two had done, and the casualties were even higher.[15]

The situation had passed the critical point. Lannes had to do something to motivate his troops and redeem the lives of the men he had just lost. He told them Napoleon was watching—he was actually too far away to see a thing, but the rhetoric was good—and the fate of the army depended on their bravery. Morand's troops listened to his unusually impassioned appeal in stony silence, embarrassed by their reluctance and staring at the ground. Seeing that rhetoric was futile and refusing to issue a direct order, Lannes had one option left and he took it. "All right, gentlemen," he told his silent audience, "I remember what it's like to be a grenadier. Been there, done that, can do it again." He grabbed a scaling ladder and ran for the ditch, as Scipio Africanus had done at Iliturgi in 206 B.C. Startled at first, then appalled by his audacity, his aides raced after him. Beneath a hail of Austrian bullets, they argued and, when that did not work, snatched the ladder away. He let them have it, though he knew he could lose them all in the space of seconds. "Go on, boys," he said, "and take Ratisbon!" Personal example succeeded where all else had failed; Morand's troops rushed forward en masse, also as Scipio's men had done. This assault, in full strength and motivated by a new burst of élan, crossed the promenades and the moat and climbed the breach to the walls.[16]

Hungarian grenadiers opposed them at first, but their resistance did not last. Once over the walls, the infantry took two of the main gates and flung them open as Lannes led the rest into Ratisbon. Inside the Straubing Gate, he stopped to consider two problems. The first and most obvious was eliminating the rest of the garrison. The second, dependent on the successful outcome of the first, was to capture the heavily defended bridges on the other side of Ratisbon. The enemy could escape and stop the French pursuit if he did not stop them first.[17]

Lannes spent the rest of the afternoon taking Ratisbon street by street, always working his way toward the bridges. By five o'clock he had the walls, gates, and

most of the squares, but small groups of defenders still contested his advance. He left his troops busily engaged in wearing down the resistance while he and a contingent grenadiers went off to find the bridges. This impromptu band engaged in several mêlées along the way, and stopped for a moment on a narrow street whose timber houses were blazing from the French shells. Burning houses were not usually dangerous, but these were perilously close to some munitions wagons. When Lannes confronted the Austrian commander and demanded his surrender, the colonel replied, "We'll be blown up before I have *time* to surrender." "You're right—move those barrels," Lannes told him. An odd assembly line formed as Lannes, the colonel, and their men moved the powder to safety.[18]

Nothing in Ratisbon was easy. Lannes had a hard time finding his way through the narrow, twisting streets, then realized none of them had the slightest idea where they were going, much less where the bridges might be. His progress was slowed by the need to stop and fight, stop and fortify captured intersections, stop and ask directions. Unfortunately none of the inhabitants, barricaded in their houses since that morning, answered the repeated banging on their doors. Marbot finally prevailed on a pretty dressmaker, who sent them in the right direction. By the time Lannes reached the bridge that night, it was blocked by a conflagration in the suburb of Stadt-am-Hof. Worse, Archduke Charles had reached the left bank of the Danube, more interested in getting away than fighting to hold Ratisbon.[19]

Pursuing the archduke was the next order of business, but Napoleon first attended to necessary army reorganization. The borrowed divisions Lannes had commanded since 20 April were returned to Davout, and he went to Landshut to join the 2nd Corps on 26 April. This new corps was not as large as Napoleon had originally intended, but at least it was finally in one place. New orders reached Landshut at the same time Lannes did. The goal of pursuing the enemy was packed with details about halts along the Danube's south bank and bridges to cross—if the enemy did not destroy them first. During the next two weeks Lannes used his engineers to repair or replace bridges far more than he used the 2nd Corps to fight the enemy.[20]

When Napoleon ordered him on to Vilsbiburg, he sent back a short report and moved on. "Bessières, Oudinot, Saint-Hilaire, and [General Joseph-Laurent] Demont are with me. . . . I think the enemy has crossed the Inn and is on the other side of Mühldorf—maybe 40,000 of them. . . . We'll leave at dawn for Mühldorf unless you have other orders." Napoleon did, and ordered the 2nd Corps to Burghausen and then to Braunau.[21]

The Austrians had finally caught on to the value of destroying bridges immediately after crossing them. At Burghausen they had set the single-span bridge afire. Three hundred feet wide and swollen by rains and melting snow, the Salzach could not be forded at any point, as Lannes quickly discovered. His mind on the emperor's tight schedule, he committed his bridge-train staff and every available soldier to extinguish the fire and bring timbers to make repairs. He supervised the work, shouting for speed, materials, and, among other things, a pump to spray water on the burning timbers. The more excited he got the less coherent he became; the engineers could not decipher Lannes's Gascon French. The bridge nearly burned down before Marbot, used to his commander's accent,

found a pump and saved the bridge. No one laughed where Lannes could hear him, but his malapropisms caused considerable merriment around evening campfires.[22]

Napoleon knew the corps lacked sufficient supplies to repair or build the many bridges between them and the enemy. Because most of his subsequent orders dealt with the mundane details of acquiring timbers, anchors, and boats, it was clear he expected the army to leap-frog across the Danube tributaries, one way or another. As a case in point, Lannes received instructions to requisition increasingly scarce anchors for pontoons, build whatever bridges were required, and capture the powder magazines supposedly at Wels. The enemy did not intend to give them up without at least a token resistance. When his grenadiers encountered the Austrians in the woods outside Wels, Oudinot charged them with his staff and a cavalry squadron. The enemy retreated, conceded their powder magazines, fired the bridge behind them and, safely on the other bank, aimed their artillery at the French. The guns stopped the 2nd Corps from repairing the burning bridge or building pontoons. Joining Oudinot, Lannes spent the night wondering what to do about the enemy guns. Before dawn on the 3rd, he rounded up his artillery reserve and subjected the Austrians to a couple of hours' worth of sustained fire. When the smoke cleared, they had gone, and Lannes sent Napoleon a status report. "I think Hiller and Archduke Louis have about 50,000 troops, and they're heading for Linz to join Archduke Charles [near] Budweis. . . . The bridge at Wels is down, but I can fix it in four to six hours at the most if you send me more sappers." Berthier reminded Lannes about the powder magazines at Wels and suggested his engineers take the fuses and charges as well. Lannes wondered what he was supposed to do with all these explosives; his orders were to build bridges, not blow them, but he got his corps across the Traun in less time than he had planned.[23]

Oudinot reached Enns by the evening of 3 May, with Bessières's cavalry and Masséna's 4th Corps; Lannes was on the road with the rest of his corps heading for Steyer. He got as far as Kremsmünster and stopped there because he had outdistanced his other divisions. "I'm spending the night to wait for Saint-Hilaire—he won't get here before noon tomorrow at the earliest. Send any new orders to me [at Kremsmünster]."[24]

The bridge at Steyer was burning when Lannes arrived the next morning, and he lost no time reporting what he knew would be a lengthy delay. "It'll take me at least two days to repair or rebuild the bridge—I've got enough boats to get my troops, including the artillery, across by tomorrow [5 May] . . . the roads from here to Amstetten are deplorable and they'll slow us down." Bad roads made no difference to Napoleon's plans, and he ordered Lannes to join the rest of the army at Amstetten. Berthier also reminded him to bring his engineers, because the bridge at Amstetten had been destroyed. By this time Lannes went nowhere without his bridge team, and needed no reminders from the chief-of-staff about something so obvious.[25]

The bridge at Enns, where Napoleon had his headquarters, also needed repairs. While they were underway, he told Lannes not to advance any further, and cautioned against premature attacks on isolated enemy contingents. "Don't

worry about us—we won't attack anyone until I know the rest of the corps have crossed the river at Enns." The next stop was the Benedictine abbey of Melk, perched on a promontory overlooking the Danube, where the monks offered their considerable hospitality to Napoleon and Lannes. Relaxing from the rigors of the past three days over wine from the well-stocked cellars, Napoleon discussed the proximity of the Austrians at Saint-Pölten and what to do about it. If Lannes sent Saint-Hilaire's division there at dawn the next day, he could take the bridge before the enemy had a chance to destroy it. After Saint-Pölten, he said, there was nothing between them and Vienna.[26]

Lannes left Melk at two in the morning of 10 May, without much rest but at least with more than enough decent food and even better wine. He passed first by Dürnstein and then Saint-Pölten, where his divisions waited. Before he could leave, the abbess of a nearby convent stopped him, evidently upset. She said the armies passing so close to them had frightened the sisters, and it seemed likely to her that some of the soldiers, Austrian as well as French, might pillage the convent. Impatient to reach Vienna before the enemy could escape, Lannes was nevertheless susceptible to pleas from nuns. He left a small detachment around the convent to deter marauders and galloped away. Though she would never see him again, the abbess remembered his hurried but courtly assistance.[27]

Originally entrusted to Archduke Maximilian, the capital's defense had been turned over to Hiller, who immediately burned the Tabor Bridge, abandoned the city for the Bisamberg heights, and left a rear guard between Spitz and Enzersdorf. Only a small force remained to garrison Vienna. The 2nd Corps got there first, Colbert's light cavalry leading the way and reaching the outskirts shortly before nine. Generals Jean-Victor Tharreau and Claparède stopped at the eastern suburb of Mariahilf, while Oudinot's grenadiers approached the gates of the capital. The garrison took exception to their approach and shelled them. Arriving amid the firing and accompanied by Napoleon, Lannes sent two of his aides with a message requesting a cease-fire and the declaration of Vienna as an open city. A hussar squadron ignored the flag of truce Saint-Mars carried; one of them attacked the aide with his saber. The two aides retreated at once, message undelivered.[28]

A siege was out of the question. Lannes sent Oudinot's grenadiers to eliminate the resistance, which lasted until the 2nd Corps artillery seconded the grenadiers' efforts. Hiller conceded defeat and Oudinot and Tharreau rode into Vienna on 13 May at the head of their troops. As a victory parade it was not much; an irate Viennese housewife, expressing her opinion of the French presence, dumped a pot of scalding water on Tharreau as he rode beneath her windows.[29]

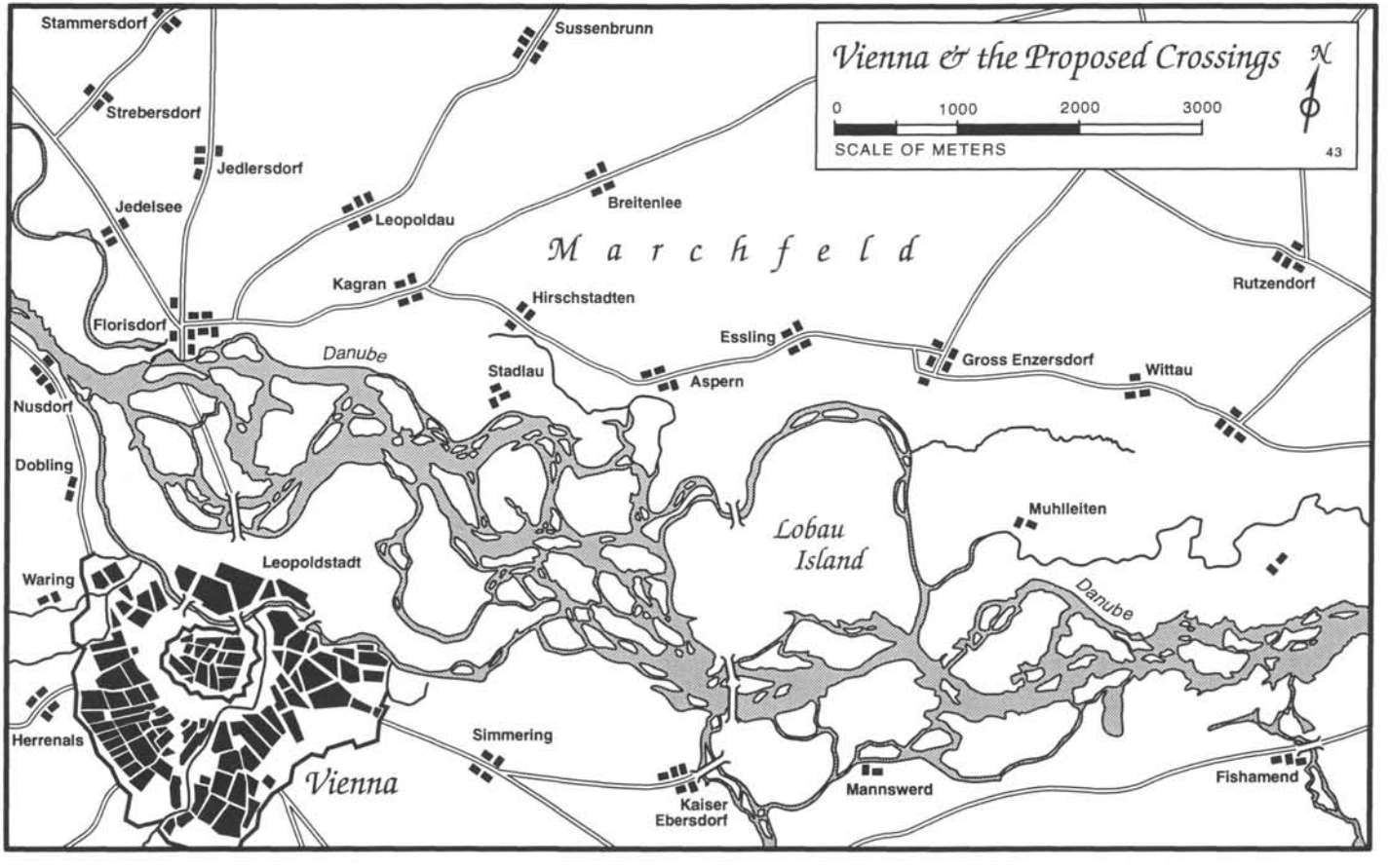
Napoleon moved into the Schönbrunn palace, while the corps commanders had a choice of Viennese residences recently vacated by their owners. Lannes appropriated the splendid palace of Prince Albert of Saxe-Teschen, one of the richest nobles in Europe, for his staff, but he spent the nights at Schönbrunn, afraid he might miss something if he stayed in Vienna. The aides enjoyed the few days' rest, waited on by the prince's skeleton staff. Marbot recalled that the house was the most ostentatious example of Baroque style and conspicuous consumption any of them had ever seen.[30]

Supplies of various kinds had to be found for the troops streaming into Vienna, and Napoleon gave this responsibility to several civil and military officials. The emperor authorized Baron Sébastien-Joseph Comeau de Charry to requisition horses for the cavalry from corps commanders down to Viennese livery stables. The baron had rounded up more than 2,000 horses without a hitch—until he came for six gray thoroughbreds stabled at Lannes's headquarters. These horses belonged to the king of Bavaria, and the marshal was undecided whether to buy them for 36,000 francs or send them back. Comeau was not interested in possible financial arrangements with the king, and attempted to requisition the horses. Lannes's aides refused, rudely, in the baron's opinion, and he demanded to see the marshal. He was left to fidget for more than an hour in Prince Albert's ornate salon. The longer he waited the madder he got, and he took a perverse pleasure in remembering every negative thing he knew about Lannes: in spite of his considerable military talent, he was proud, surly, bad-tempered, and despised émigrés in general and Comeau in particular.

When Lannes finally appeared, a veritable shouting match erupted. Comeau demanded the horses and Lannes threatened to throw him out the nearest window. Before a duel broke out in the middle of priceless antiques and gold leaf paneling, the baron stalked off in a huff to make a full report on such truculence to Napoleon. On his way out the door he ran into Lannes's Spanish aide, de Albuquerque, and subjected him to a lecture on real dukes, such as the aide's father, and parvenu dukes, like the aide's commander. He fared no better with Napoleon. Instead of soothing Comeau's injured dignity, the emperor thought the incident was funny; so did everyone else who heard the details before the day was over.[31]

The matter of supplies and horses aside, Napoleon evaluated the best ways to get at the enemy. He knew that of all the rivers they had crossed, one way or another, to reach Vienna, the Danube would be the most difficult. "Crossing a river like the Danube in the face of an enemy familiar with the terrain, with the inhabitants on his side, is one of the greatest military operations conceivable," he admitted. The engineers had given him three possible crossing sites to consider. The first was at Nüßdorf, three miles above Vienna, the second at Kaiser-Ebersdorf, facing Lobau Island, and the third was at Fischamend, thirteen miles below Vienna. Napoleon eliminated Fischamend as too far away, selected Kaiser-Ebersdorf, and decided to use Nüßdorf as a diversion. He sent Lannes to build a bridge and mislead Archduke Charles into thinking the French would cross there. Masséna went to Kaiser-Ebersdorf to supervise a bridge network to Lobau Island and the Danube's left bank. Both marshals were told to build their bridges at the same time so the enemy had to watch both places at once.[32]

The small island of Schwarze-Laken lay opposite Nüßdorf. Though a bridge led from the island to the left bank, there was none from Nüßdorf to the island. The river was so narrow there that building one would be fairly easy. Prodded by Napoleon's orders to hurry and the need to secure the bridgehead before the Austrians at nearby Spitz found out what was happening, Lannes sent two of Saint-Hilaire's regiments to Schwarze-Laken in boats. Neither he nor Saint-Hilaire stopped to think; they were not sure how many enemy troops were at Spitz


Vienna & the Proposed Crossings
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Stammersdorf
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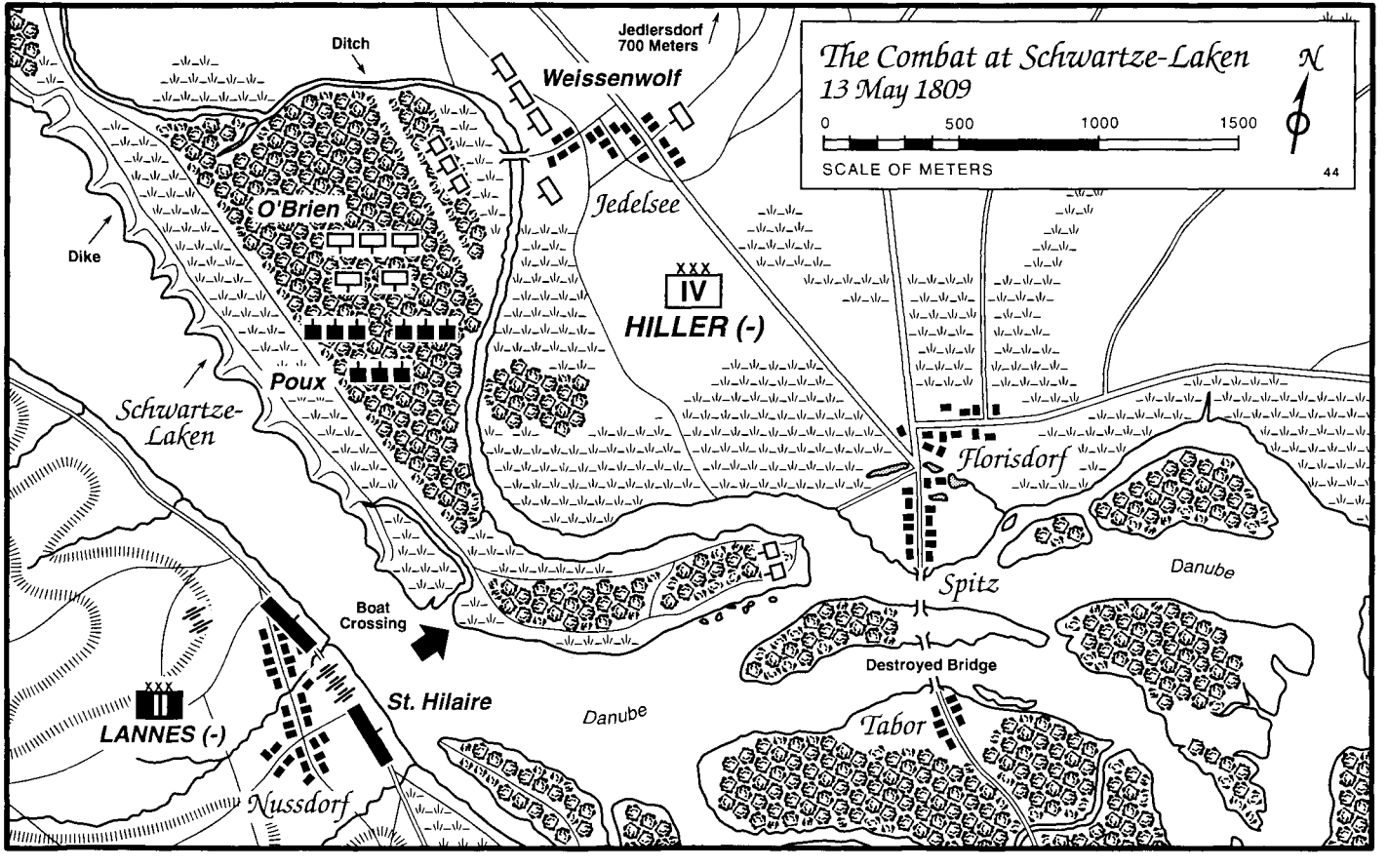
Leopoldau
Breitenlee
Marchfeld
Kagran
Hirschstadten
Rutzendorf
Florisdorf
Danube
Essling
Gross Enzersdorf
Wittau
Stadlau
Aspern
Nusdorf
Dobling
Muhlleiten
Lobau
Island
Leopoldstadt
Waring
Danube
Herrenals
Simmering
Vienna
Kaiser
Ebersdorf
Mannswerd
Fishamend


The Combat at Schwartze-Laken
13 May 1809
N
0
500
1000
1500
SCALE OF METERS
44
Ditch
Jedlersdorf
700 Meters
Weissenwolf
Jedelsee
O'Brien
Dike
XXX
IV
HILLER (-)
Poux
Schwartze-
Laken
Florisdorf
Danube
Spitz
Boat
Crossing
Destroyed Bridge
St. Hilaire
Danube
Tabor
XXX
II
LANNES (-)
Nussdorf

and had made no contingency plan for reinforcements. The regiments encountered stiff resistance from enemy outposts, who sent for the troops at Spitz. Outnumbered, without artillery, the French fought a losing battle. Napoleon arrived in the middle of it, took a quick look, and chewed Saint-Hilaire out for his stupidity. More responsible for the debacle than his divisional general, Lannes tried to duck out of range of the emperor's verbal fire. He tripped over a rope and fell into the Danube; Napoleon waded in and fished him out. They stood dripping on the bank, covered in rich Danube mud, short-tempered from heat, stress, and ill-conceived river crossings. Lannes and Saint-Hilaire rescued their remaining troops, but the losses were heavy—more than 500 killed, nearly twice that many wounded. Napoleon maintained the ruse at Nüßdorf for a few more days as the work at Kaiser-Ebersdorf and Lobau Island progressed. Lannes stayed there until 19 May, then gathered up Saint-Hilaire's division and joined the rest of the army.[33]

The Danube divided into several branches at Kaiser-Ebersdorf. To get from the right bank to the left, the army had to cross over three islands on four bridges for a distance of about two miles. Because they were hastily built, the bridges were not stable. The first two, slender and without proper anchors, could hardly support the infantry; the weight of cavalry and artillery might bend or snap them. Worse, swollen by rain and melting snow from the western mountains, the river might sweep them away. Although the bridge from Lobau Island to the mainland was sturdy, it would be useless if any of the first two broke. Napoleon either overlooked or ignored these possibilities in his haste to reach the enemy.[34]

Archduke Charles understood the Danube's capricious nature. From his position on the heights running from Bisamberg down to Leopoldsdorf he watched the French at Nüßdorf and Kaiser-Ebersdorf. Waiting with his 104,000 troops for the French to reach him, the archduke planned his strategy. It was amazingly simple: destroy the bridges before most of Napoleon's forces reached the mainland, surround and eliminate those who did, take Lobau Island and fortify it with artillery, then destroy the rest of the army on the right bank.[35]

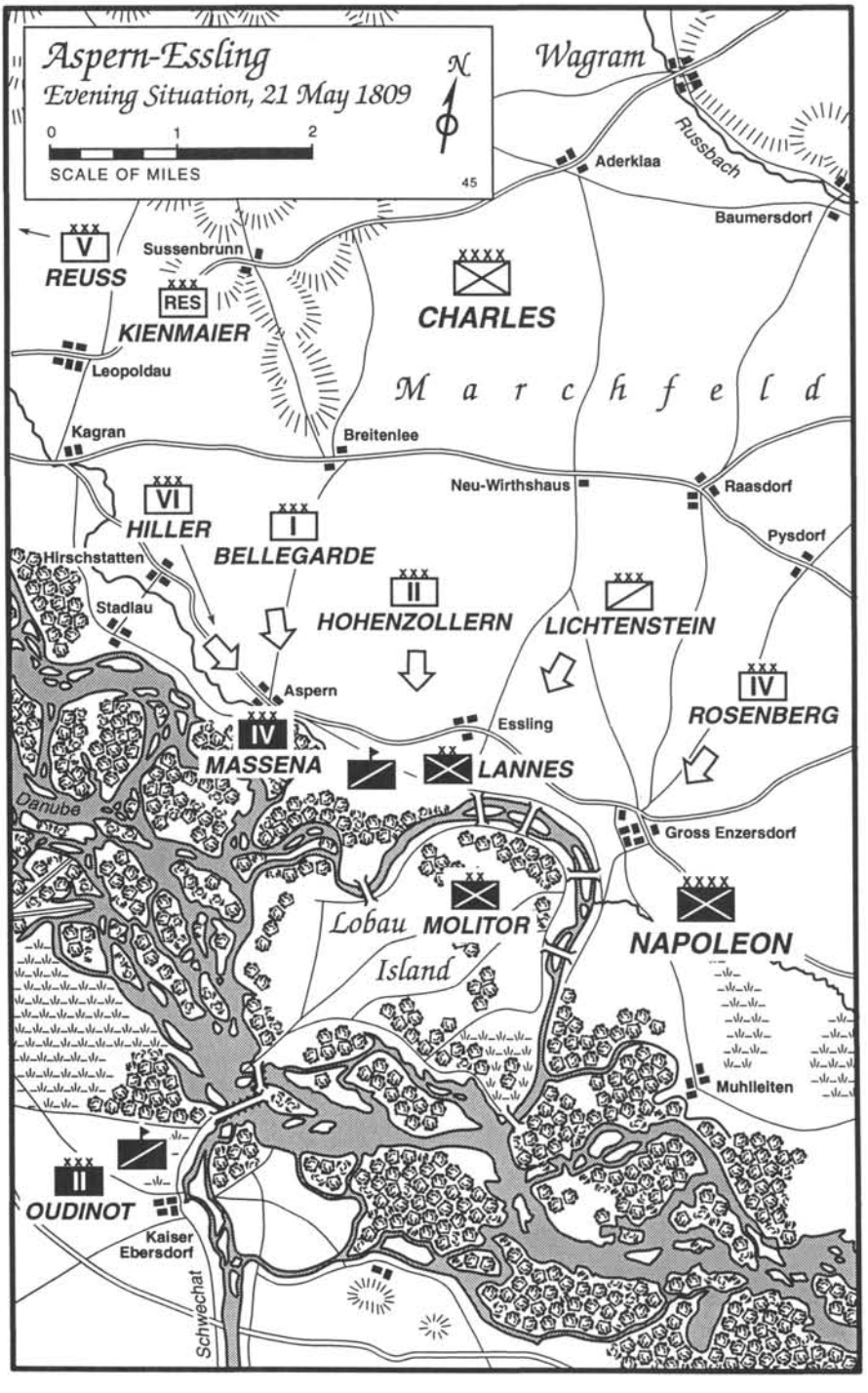
General Gabriel-Jean Molitor of Masséna's 4th Corps reached Lobau on 19 May to build the last bridge. That same day Lannes received orders to cross at Kaiser-Ebersdorf at dawn on the 20th. Nothing was easy. The Austrians smashed the first pontoon bridge with a large bundle of logs sent down on the swift current, and Molitor spent more time chasing an Austrian advance-guard away from Lobau than he did building the bridge. The engineers worked frantically to repair the damaged span while Lannes and Masséna crossed to the mainland after dark to check the enemy positions. None of them discovered anything conclusive. Though Austrian pickets had stopped his cavalry patrols, Bessières claimed there were no significant enemy forces in the vicinity. Lannes thought the archduke had left a rear-guard of 6,000 to 8,000 behind to cover his withdrawal to Bisamberg. Disagreeing with them both, Masséna and his aide, Jean-Jacques Pelet, climbed a church tower at Aspern sometime after midnight for a better look. Although he did not see many campfires, Masséna was convinced Archduke Charles's whole army had concentrated close enough to worry about. The three marshals returned to Lobau at two and conferred with Napoleon, sharing their opinions and whatever

scanty evidence they had.[36]

The emperor's valet, Constant, recalled the generally negative attitudes and bad tempers displayed that night. He said that naturally Lannes was the most conspicuous example of a short fuse. Tired of arguments, divisive opinions, and inflated egos, he attempted to speak to Napoleon. Bessières blocked his way—Constant claimed he usually stuck as close to the emperor as possible. Lannes was having none of that nonsense; he grabbed the marshal by his collar and spun him around. "Back off—the emperor doesn't need you to guard him! Sure is strange that on the battlefield you're so damn far away we can't see you, but you're right in our faces when we need to see the emperor." Bessières was speechless with rage, his face livid, but Napoleon intervened before the confrontation degenerated into a brawl. "Calm down, Jean," he said, his hand firmly on the marshal's wrist. Lannes stalked off into the night, leaving Bessières to splutter at the indignity of it all, and the other witnesses to smirk at the truth of his comment.[37]

Not knowing much more than he did before the meeting, Napoleon returned to Kaiser-Ebersdorf. Lannes commandeered the only shelter on Lobau for the rest of a very short night. When he recalled the predawn hours of 21 May during his exile in Saint Helena, the emperor put a rather bizarre spin on the marshal's brief stay in the abandoned peasant's cottage. It suited him to claim that his subordinate actually spent the night in Vienna, and "not alone." This claim, though questionable, could mean that Lannes was either sleeping with the enemy or surrounded by his staff in Prince Albert's palace. Given the emperor's tendency to allege some fairly odd things, especially years after the fact, it is reasonable to assume he meant to imply the presence of some Viennese lady who had no objections to consorting with the invaders. Marbot remembered the occasion differently—and probably more accurately. He said the aides had gathered around a fire outside the hut and tried not to disturb their marshal. They were probably not successful. "With our [usual] military insouciance and without a care for tomorrow's dangers, we joked and sang all the newest songs," he wrote. "De Albuquerque charmed us with his lovely voice, then told hilarious stories of his adventures. The poor boy never dreamed that the next day would be his last, nor did we imagine the plain on the other bank would be drenched with the blood of our good marshal and every one of us."[38]

Masséna moved the rest of his division across to the mainland before dawn on the 21st. Before the sun rose on Whitsunday and the church bells of Vienna and its suburbs announced a holy day of obligation, Lannes joined Masséna on the flat plain facing an enemy they could not yet see. They examined the plain and the villages of Aspern to the left of it and Essling to the right, both more than a mile from the pontoon bridge joining the mainland with Lobau. The only defensive positions worth noting on the flat landscape were Aspern's church and walled cemetery, and Essling's immense four-story granary. Molitor had moved into Aspern before dawn, the spearhead of Masséna's corps, while Boudet's division held the granary until Lannes's 2nd Corps crossed the Danube and took over. Not especially optimistic, the two marshals returned to Lobau, where Napoleon gave them their orders for the morning.[39]


Aspern-Essling
Evening Situation, 21 May 1809
0
1
2
SCALE OF MILES
45
N
Wagram
Russbach
Aderklaa
Baumersdorf
V
REUSS
Sussenbrunn
RES
KIENMAIER
XXXX
CHARLES
Leopoldau
Marchfeld
Kagran
Breitenlee
Neu-Wirthshaus
Raasdorf
VI
HILLER
I
BELLEGARDE
Pysdorf
Hirschstatten
Stadlau
II
HOHENZOLLERN
LICHTENSTEIN
IV
ROSENBERG
Aspern
Essling
IV
MASSENA
LANNES
Danube
Gross Enzersdorf
Lobau
Island
MOLITOR
NAPOLEON
Muhlleiten
II
OUDINOT
Kaiser
Ebersdorf
Schwechat

Stopped by the bottleneck at the Lobau bridgehead, Lannes saw Doctor Jean-Baptiste Lanefranque, one of the army's many surgeons, waiting among the crowds of troops. "Better not lose sight of me—I'll probably need you," he told the doctor. "I've got a bad feeling about this, but however it turns out, it's my last battle." Lanefranque was not particularly disturbed by this remark. "He's said this before, usually when he was tired, discouraged, or unhappy about something," Lanefranque recalled. "If he weren't so attached to Napoleon, I think he'd have already quit. Still, he's like many others—worn out and convinced the present campaign will kill him."[40]

Regardless of his state of mind, Lannes rode out with his staff to Essling. The village did not impress him with its amenities. Small, bisected by a narrow unpaved street and circled by a shallow ditch, it was completely open to the surrounding plain. Easy to attack and hard to defend, he thought. Only the solid stone granary looming over the few houses offered any defensive possibilities. It would have to do, and so would Boudet's borrowed division.[41]

Archduke Charles ordered a general advance, sending three columns against Aspern. Entrenched in Essling's granary with Boudet, Lannes faced Franz Rosenberg's 11,000 troops and forty-two guns. It was an unequal contest. By the middle of the afternoon, Rosenberg's artillery had leveled half the village and fired the remaining houses. Encouraged, he launched several infantry attacks late in the afternoon. Outnumbered by nearly three-to-one odds but determined to hold the village, Lannes sent Boudet's infantry into the streets. They used garden walls as cover whenever they could, but usually it was not enough to protect them from the enemy coming at them from all sides. De Albuquerque was killed as he ran to the granary with a message from one of Boudet's colonels. Decapitated by an Austrian shell, his body lay in the dusty street among dozens of other casualties. The superior enemy artillery also killed General Jean-Louis d'Espagne when Bessières made a late-afternoon charge. Lannes considered them his friends, but he had no time to mourn their loss.[42]

He *did* take time to lash out at Bessières—again—who unfortunately for him had been placed under his orders. Convinced the cavalry commander had used the plain between Aspern and Essling as if it were a parade ground, he sent his aide, Captain Louis de Viry, off with the blunt order to charge the enemy and make it count. When the side returned, he admitted he had not conveyed the order in the marshal's exact words. "I told him Your Excellency requested him to charge with all his cavalry." "His Excellency" lost his temper, and told Captain Charles LaBédoyère exactly what to say. LaBédoyère fared no better, apparently more worried about offending Bessières, and returned to report his courteous but inaccurate delivery. Lannes was fast running out of patience, time, and aides. He commandeered Marbot, who had just ridden up. "Marshal Augereau once told me I could count on you, so prove it—tell Bessières I *order him to charge at once*—got that?" Marbot got it, rode off to deliver the unexpurgated order, received a tongue-lashing from Bessières for his presumption, and returned to tell Lannes he had made sure he repeated every word accurately. Understandably furious with Lannes for all sorts of reasons, Bessières executed the order perfectly, driving the Austrians back. An altercation broke out between them later that night when they

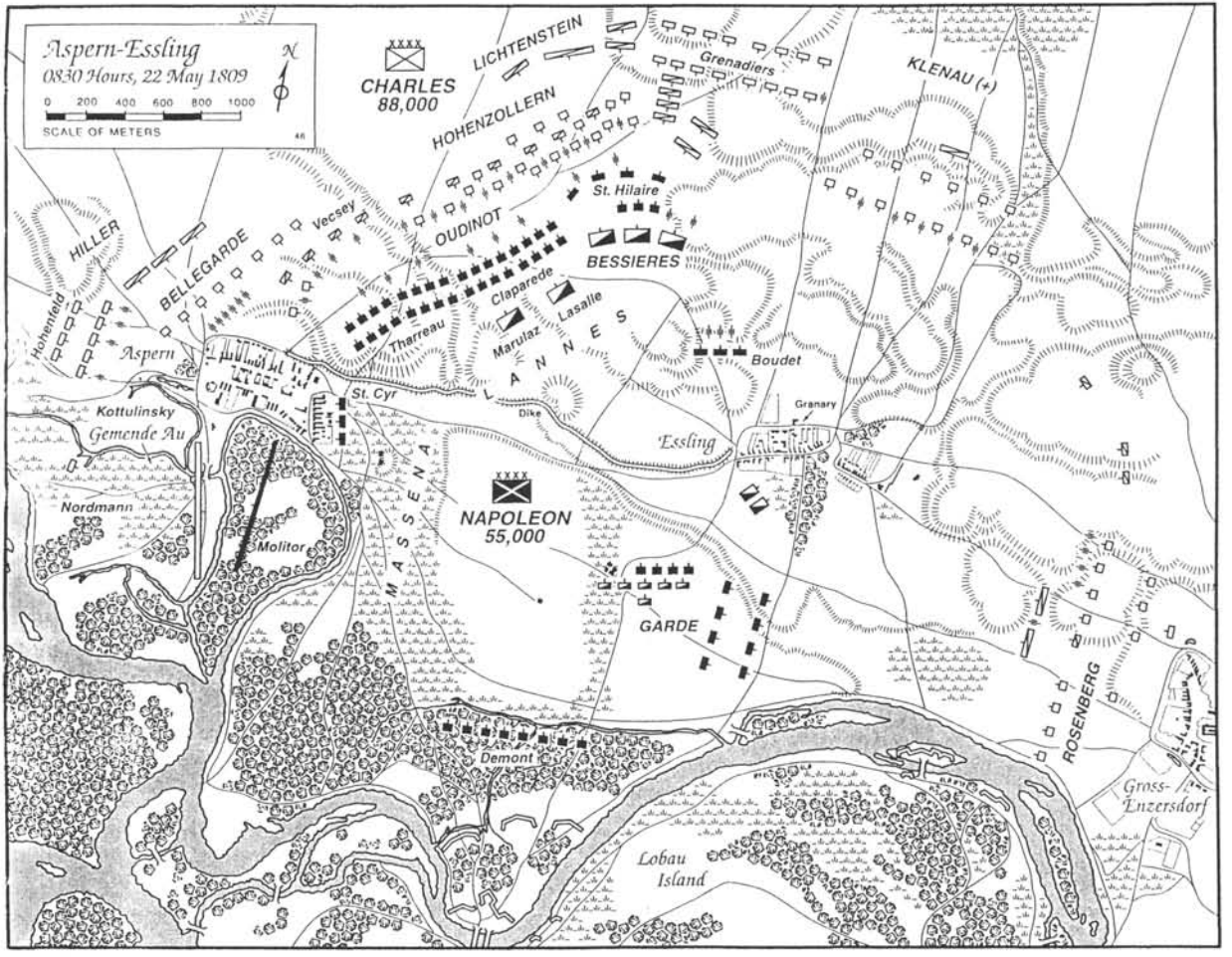
met at Masséna's camp. This time loud arguments led to drawn swords, and only Masséna's abrupt "cease and desist" command stopped the duel.[43]

All afternoon and into the night, the French had been arriving piecemeal across the bridges, delayed by breaks and bottlenecks on the shaky spans. No obstacles had impeded Archduke Charles's advance across the plain—other than his cautious nature—but his five columns had been stopped by Masséna's two divisions in Aspern and Lannes's single division in Essling, with Bessières's cavalry between them. Pelet wrote with understandable praise for the ability of a fraction of Napoleon's army to withstand a much larger force. He dismissed the Austrian offensive with some scorn, noting that all they had to show for it was the Aspern cemetery, in spite of the archduke's boast that he would throw the whole French army into the Danube. Pelet outdid himself describing Lannes and Masséna as "the two heroes of the army, illustrious commoners and born soldiers, the scourge of ancient reputations and the European oligarchy . . . if we could resist such superior forces with just these two, what could we have done with the rest of our army?"[44]

Around two on the morning of the 22nd the Austrians attacked Aspern, and by three they began a slow advance along most of their front. Boudet regrouped his division in the granary and the stone houses closest to it. A few enemy regiments advanced into Essling, but Lannes told Boudet to remain on the defensive until he arrived with Saint-Hilaire's division. He got there by six, and within an hour had sent the enemy reeling back to Groß-Enzersdorf. That done, Lannes regrouped his divisions for an attack against the Austrian center. With Boudet to his right, Claparède and Oudinot echeloned behind and to the left, he led Saint-Hilaire's division himself. The Austrian center was weak, and Archduke Charles was not blind to the mass of infantry poised to drive between Prince Friedrich Hohenzollern's corps and Lichtenstein's cavalry reserves. With more speed and determination than he had shown the previous day, he reinforced the center and took personal command. Of course Pelet disagreed, writing that the archduke spent more time *preparing* to move his troops than actually moving them.[45]

Supported by Bessières's cavalry, the French advance initially succeeded. The shock of the two forces colliding was terrible, but the French had the upper hand and pushed the Austrians back, in spite of the archduke's supposedly motivational presence. The orderly withdrawal soon degenerated into a series of fierce mêlées when Lannes rode in with Saint-Hilaire's division, and the enemy hurried back to its original positions.[46]

With his infantry at a standstill, Archduke Charles used his guns to shell the 2nd Corps as it moved toward him. One of the first casualties of this bombardment was Saint-Hilaire. The general, struck in the foot by a three-pound ball, was carried to the field hospitals on Lobau Island. Lannes took command of the division and continued to advance. At that point he had no reason to think it would not succeed, but the archduke knew otherwise. Using another of his weapons, in this case the Danube's swift current, he had ordered a floating mill set ablaze and sent it down the river. It shattered the span linking the south bank to Lobau. As he waited for damage reports, Napoleon sent word to Lannes to halt


Aspern-Essling
0830 Hours, 22 May 1809
0 200 400 600 800 1000
SCALE OF METERS
N
CHARLES
88,000
LICHTENSTEIN
HOHENZOLLERN
Grenadiers
KLENAU (+)
St. Hilaire
OUDINOT
BESSIERES
HILLER
BELLEGARDE
Vecsey
Hohenfeld
Aspern
Claparede
Lasalle
Marulaz
Thareau
LANNES
Boudet
Granary
St. Cyr
Dike
Kottulinsky
Gemende Au
Essling
Nordmann
Molitor
MASSENA
NAPOLEON
55,000
GARDE
ROSENBERG
Demont
Gross-
Enzersdorf
Lobau
Island

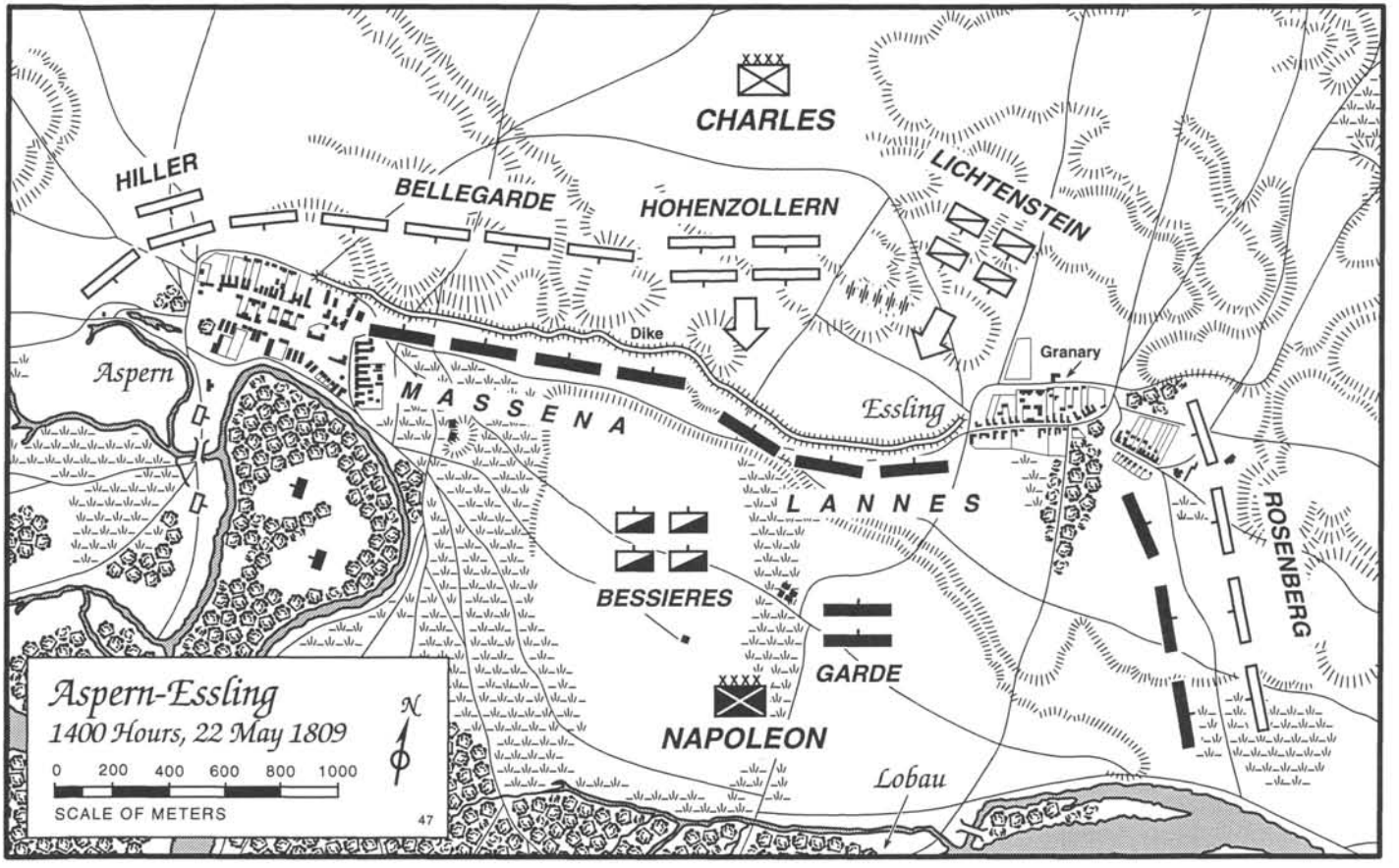
his advance. The 2nd Corps held its position on the open plain, unprotected, vulnerable to the enemy's fire. Surprised by the sudden halt, Archduke Charles took advantage of it to regroup, call in reinforcements for his center, and order Lichtenstein's cavalry forward. He also rallied the reluctant infantry by seizing a flag and galloping to the head of his troops. As additional insurance, he ordered the artillery to step up its shelling of Lannes's corps.[47]

Reality was beginning to sink in. Reports from Lobau said the bridge could not be repaired, at least not that day. Davout's entire 3rd Corps, Saint-Sulpice's cuirassiers, the artillery, and ammunition were stranded on the Danube's right bank. Whatever troops, cartridges, and guns Lannes had at nine that morning was all he would have for the rest of the day—or longer. With the rest of the 2nd Corps retiring under fire toward Lobau, Lannes took Saint-Hilaire's division back to Essling. They had to fight for every step, dodging enemy shells and cavalry charges. Much as Archduke Charles had done, Lannes encouraged his hard-pressed troops, but without flag-waving and exalted rhetoric. He told them this withdrawal was no different than the one at Marengo—same enemy, same shells, same bleak prospect—but they should also remember how they had won in the end. He said Austrians were still Austrians, and did not think they had changed much since Marengo. Unfortunately they *had* changed.[48]

Archduke Charles reinforced Rosenberg for a renewed attack on Essling, the key to the French position on the left bank, and ordered General Constantine d'Aspre's four Hungarian grenadier battalions to take the village. The general obeyed, launching five assaults against Boudet, who still held the western end of Essling, including the granary, but could not dislodge him. D'Aspre and his generals led another assault, because the grenadiers refused to advance without them, but had no better luck. Rosenberg had no choice but to launch a general attack in strength. His troops managed to capture several more houses, and the rest of Boudet's infantry, exhausted from hours of fighting in the streets, withdrew into the granary. The desperate hand-to-hand combat resulted in appalling casualties, according to one witness, but was "necessary to preserve honor and at least save this part of the army."[49]

Wondering why the French simply would not quit, Archduke Charles took a moment to evaluate the situation. He had been fighting for over thirty-six hours, but so had the French. The 2nd Corps and Boudet's division were clearly fatigued, but so were his troops. However, he had reinforcements, ammunition, and guns, whereas the French did not. Though their defense had been formidable, he knew they could not hold Essling against further assaults and continued shelling. He ordered Hohenzollern to attack the 2nd Corps on the left, drive a wedge between Lannes and Essling, take the village, and destroy the resistance.[50]

Lannes saw them coming at two and ordered his troops to wait until the Austrian infantry was nearly on top of them before firing—every remaining shot had to find its mark. The division held firm, then fired, stopping the enemy cold. In the midst of the firestorm, Lannes lost his horse, the second of the day, and did not bother to find another—he did not think it was necessary, under the present circumstances. He also lost another aide, Captain de Viry, mortally wounded by a shot to the heart. The rest of his aides were decorated with makeshift bandages in


CHARLES
HILLER
BELLEGARDE
HOHENZOLLERN
LICHTENSTEIN
Dike
Granary
Aspern
MASSENA
Essling
LANNES
ROSENBERG
BESSIERES
GARDE
NAPOLEON
Lobau
Aspern-Essling
1400 Hours, 22 May 1809
N
0 200 400 600 800 1000
SCALE OF METERS
47

various places, but none considered their wounds serious enough to warrant the field hospital. Exasperated with the infantry's failure, the archduke launched a series of cavalry charges to cut Lannes off from Essling. Oudinot's grenadiers responded with a vicious defense, proving that the enemy would have to fight for every single advantage. At the same time Rosenberg finally managed to drive the rest of Boudet's decimated forces back into the granary and surrounded them.[51]

The offensive had not gone as Archduke Charles intended, forcing him to reconsider his options. He really had only one, so he suspended further infantry assaults and increased the artillery bombardment. From his position on Lobau Island, Napoleon had virtually no options to consider. With the bridge down and another offensive impossible without reinforcements, he had no choice but to rescue the troops pinned down on the left bank, get them to Lobau, then repair the bridge.[52]

Napoleon ordered Boudet to abandon Essling and sent the Young Guard from Lobau to cover him. He also told Lejeune to ask Lannes how many troops he had, how long he could hold his position, and if he could return to Lobau for a conference. It seemed like a ludicrous question—holding out against artillery with muskets and bayonets was a losing proposition—and meeting to discuss the obvious appeared a supreme waste of time. Lejeune rode off and found the marshal, with less than 300 grenadiers and a few infantrymen from Saint-Hilaire's division, sheltered by a long dike connecting the villages. "What you see is all I've got," Lannes told him, "but we'll hold out until the last one's gone—tell the emperor that." He did not bother to say whether he would reach Lobau in time for Napoleon's strategy session. Riding back to the island, Lejeune thought "the last one gone" would more than likely be fairly soon, and just as likely to include the marshal. He also thought that Lannes had not spoken with any of his usual bravado; instead, he had been oddly matter-of-fact.[53]

By five o'clock all that remained of the battle was the sporadic Austrian shelling of any French troops still in range. It was time enough, though possibly a bit premature, for the adversaries to count the dead and wounded, issue proclamations, and claim victory. In his report to emperor Francis II, Archduke Charles said, among other things, "Napoleon had found himself in a position that was rare for a great captain—having to fight for his own survival." Napoleon insisted he did not lose—how could he have, as part of his army remained masters of the field at the end of the second day while the Austrians had withdrawn. He also claimed that Archduke Charles had not broken the Danube bridges and stopped the French offensive; he blamed the swift river current. The officers and men who had fought for two long days knew better.[54]

As bad as the situation had been for Lannes during the past thirty-six hours, it got much worse before the sun set. He knew the casualties had been unusually high and, although that was regrettable for the army in general, he took time in the almost eerie late afternoon silence to remember the losses of his friends—d'Espagne, Saint-Hilaire, his two junior aides d'Albuquerque and de Viry. The enemy was not yet done with him, however. General Pouzet was standing less than two feet away from him when one of the countless three-pound balls the Austrians had been firing all afternoon nearly cut him in half, his blood spraying

over the marshal and his staff. Visibly shaken, Lannes walked away and played straight into the hands of the harsh—and ironic—god of war.[55]

Unscathed by thirty-three days of hard campaigning with four pitched battles, the assault on Ratisbon, innumerable river crossings under enemy fire, and an incredibly bloody and dangerous two-day battle, his desire for a solitary moment proved fatal. Alone for the first time in weeks, he became the chance target of a spent ball fired from the direction of Groß-Enzersdorf. Staring at the ground, Lannes never saw it coming. It tore into his left leg at the knee, shattering bones, tendons, and arteries, and sliced through the right leg above the knee. Marbot was close enough to see what happened and raced over to help, the other aides and a few grenadiers behind him. Help was out of the question—the damage was more than they could handle or the marshal could understand. In shock, he thought he could get up with their assistance, but they knew better, and told him not to move. The best they could do was take him to the bridgehead and then to one of the field hospitals as quickly as possible. They improvised a stretcher from branches and Pouzet's cloak, a macabre touch about which Lannes objected. One of the aides ran ahead to find Doctor Larrey who, with the rest of his staff, had been busy with a distressing number of casualties all day. The evidence of what Lejeune had called merciful cruelty stained their aprons, hands, and arms to the elbows.[56]

Larrey met them at the bridgehead and directed the aides to the nearest field hospital, under a willow grove by the riverbank. There he and the other surgeons held a quick medical conference over the prostrate body of their patient; Lannes was still conscious and heard every word of the debate. They argued about immediate amputation, and argued about whether to amputate the severely damaged left leg only, or play it safe and amputate both. As the senior surgeon, Larrey's opinion prevailed. He convinced his colleagues to agree on the necessity of amputating just the left leg. None of them, including Larrey, wanted to do it himself, given the marginal chances of success and the marshal's grave condition. Because seniority also carried ultimate responsibility, Larrey overcame his reluctance and in less than ninety seconds performed the kind of rough surgery he had been doing for two days. He then made arrangements for Lannes to be taken to Lobau Island and left in the care of another surgeon. Larrey acknowledged later how upset he had been. "I was caught in the dilemma of basing a slight hope [for recovery] on nothing but my skill, because I knew I couldn't leave him to mend on his own, not when he was so gravely wounded," he wrote. "I wondered how I'd cope knowing his condition was already hopeless—it affected me especially because we were friends. I swear this was the worst moment of my life."[57]

Concluding his conference with the other marshals on Lobau, Napoleon was talking with Masséna after the others had gone when an aide told him what had happened to Lannes. The emperor left at once to find him. The subsequent interview between Napoleon and his gravely wounded subordinate and friend provided more than enough material for literary-inclined witnesses. At least they all agreed that the emperor was upset, kneeling in the dirt and getting the marshal's blood on his breeches and waistcoat. For once he did not have much to say, perhaps recognizing that Lannes was in no condition to indulge in conversation, no matter how touching it might be.[58]

Lannes and the rest of his shell-shocked staff spent a very long night on Lobau. Marbot was appalled with conditions on the island. Surrounded by thousands of other wounded and dying soldiers, they had nothing to eat and nothing to drink but muddy Danube water that had to be boiled first. "We're like sailors who die of thirst surrounded by the sea," Lannes commented to his aide. Rank was no guarantee of preferential treatment—a marshal got the same amount of nothing as a private. Although the day had been hot, by dark the temperature dropped, and a brisk wind blew dust over everybody.[59]

The marshal and his aides were ferried from Lobau Island at dawn on 23 May and taken to Kaiser-Ebersdorf. The aides went back to Prince Albert's palace in Vienna, where less-busy doctors would care for their wounds. Lannes was not so lucky; he was taken to a brewer's house in Kaiser-Ebersdorf, not far from Napoleon's temporary quarters. The intent, of course, was to be near both the emperor and Larrey, who could check on him each day without having to ride the nearly thirteen miles to Vienna. In this case proximity to medical care and imperial concern proved to be a bad idea. The brewer's house sat next to a stable and a low, marshy area. The air in the cramped, second-story room where Lannes was supposed to recover was oppressively hot and rank with the odor of manure and decaying hops.[60]

For the next several days a veritable progression of doctors streamed in and out of the small stone house. Larrey did not visit Lannes alone; he always brought several of his colleagues with him, perhaps thinking there was safety—or hope—in numbers. Doctors were not the only visitors. During those first days most of Lannes's colleagues among the senior officers came and went, while an amazing collection of veteran grenadiers who had known him from earlier campaigns stood in the street, crowded the doorway and downstairs rooms, and waited on the narrow staircase. When the emperor visited, as he did every day, he and Berthier had to push their way past them. Napoleon remained optimistic, even cheerful, telling Oudinot and anyone else who asked for his opinion that "he's going to get better—we'll save him." Dr. Larrey, the other and more essential part of this "we," was inclined to agree, for the moment, in spite of his earlier gloomy prognosis.[61]

Lannes even thought he might still have a future with the army, though a slightly altered one. He joked about leading his troops from his carriage if he had to. Better yet, if the allegedly clever Viennese Dr. Franck would be so kind as to fashion a decent prosthesis, he thought his aides could toss him on a horse. He said his old comrade General Caffarelli had managed just fine with one good leg, in the Syrian campaign no less. Lannes did not fool himself, however. He had known for some time how this campaign would end, and he had made no secret about it. Now he found he was in the position so many terminally ill or mortally wounded people face—acknowledging his mortality and lying to everyone just to make them feel better about it. For a while he did a fairly decent job.

The constant, excruciating pain got the better of him after a couple of days; the jokes, reassurances, and promises stopped. Fighting a battle against odds he knew he could not bluff his way past, Lannes decided a bit more honesty in the face of death could not hurt, at least not him, not now. Taking advantage of one

of Napoleon's daily appearances, he told him exactly what he thought of the situation that had brought him to such a dreadful state. "Your mistakes have cost you your best friend, but I don't think it makes any difference. You sacrifice those who've served you best, and when they die I don't think you're even sorry. You've surrounded yourself with flunkies who tell you what you want to hear, but they'll betray you in the end. I'm not like that, never have been, and I'm saying this because I care about you." No one bothered to recall how Napoleon responded, though several people later swore, out of loyalty to the emperor, that Lannes never said such unflattering things. Out of character, they claimed, but they were wrong. Lannes had made a career out of blunt, profane, and "distressing" comments to Napoleon. Having survived them, he could well afford to go out of this world in his usual style. It proved to be his last speech of any length—or coherence.[62]

The weather entered the battle, but not on the marshal's side. Periods of extreme heat and humidity alternated with abnormally cold, stormy days, and the rapid temperature fluctuations undermined his fragile resistance. By the sixth day he was completely delirious. The "virulent fever" came not from gangrene as the surgeons had originally feared but from blood poisoning, a worse threat and always fatal. Larrey realized there was nothing else he could do, left Marbot and a *pharmacien* from his staff in charge, and went off to tell Napoleon the bad news. To his credit, the usually flamboyant Marbot had developed a skill for nursing, or at least a dogged perseverance and disregard for some decidedly unpleasant duties not included in an aide's job description. When Lannes's valets said they were leaving, Marbot had called them useless fops and showed them the door. Judging from his memoirs, he seemed quite proud of his devotion and strong stomach. It is also likely he did not want to miss anything interesting or apt to be noteworthy in the future, even if it was depressing in the present.[63]

In spite of his public assurances that Lannes would recover, Napoleon expressed his private concerns in brief letters to Fouché and Cambacérès. He returned on the evening of 30 May, Larrey's warning fresh in his mind. It was much worse than he imagined, and this visit was quite short—there was nothing he could say, because Lannes was incoherent. When he left with Berthier and Constant, the latter reported that the crowds of grenadiers, usually so fierce, were now reduced to tears. "At a time like this," he said, "war is a dreadful thing." Napoleon came back the next morning shortly after dawn, but by then the marshal was dead, and Larrey was already making arrangements to move his body to Vienna for the necessary but particularly unpleasant autopsy on the body of his friend. Larrey's comment that "we were all upset at [Lannes's] death" was an understatement. Napoleon had not only lost a close friend but also one of his best corps commanders. The news had a sobering effect on the whole army. For his part, Larrey would be haunted by the result of the decisions he had made in good faith but that now seemed questionable to him.[64]

It is remarkably easy to praise the dead, as much a part of funerary preparations as a shroud and a coffin. A widely diverse number of people rose to the occasion, aware, however, that for equally diverse reasons they would all miss him. Some of the postmortem comments were well meant, though rather bizarre

under the circumstances: a "glorious death" was most assuredly *not* what Lannes would have called it. At least his army friends got it right: "He was our Roland, and we loved him." So did Napoleon, who said, "This is the way it all ends" as he shed tears in his breakfast.[65]

NOTES

1. As part of a posthumous tribute, one of the local newspapers mentioned this event, along with other incidents recalled by those who remembered Lannes. *Journal du Gers*, Sunday, 10 July 1810.

2. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 112–13.

3. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 14975, Instructions to Berthier, 30 March 1809, XVIII, 473–487. The newly created 2nd Corps was impressive—on paper. It included Oudinot's élite grenadier division, and three other infantry divisions, commanded by Generals Tharreau, Claparède, and Grandjean. In addition, Lannes would have d'Espagne's cuirassier division and Colbert's light cavalry brigade. The whole corps, augmented by fifty-six guns, would number more than 46,000 men. The Situations of 1 April listed the dispersed corps at 56,418 troops. Unfortunately, the 2nd Corps never developed according to plan, undergoing almost as many permutations as Lannes's old 5th Corps had experienced during the 1805 campaign. At the beginning of April, Tharreau had 6,500 troops at Augsburg, Claparède had 7,300, and Saint–Hilaire, who would replace Grandjean, had 11,300 at Ratisbon. The cavalry consisted of slightly less than 5,000. At the end of the 1809 campaign, Lannes never had more than 22,000 troops. See Service historique, Armée d'Allemagne, État du 2e Corps, 1 April 1809, Carton C^2 506; Berthier to Masséna, 15 April 1809, quoted in Commandant Saski, *Campagne de 1809 en Allemagne et en Autriche*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1899), II, 166, n. 1; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15029, Napoleon to Berthier, 8 April 1809, XVIII, 522–23.

4. Marie-Jeanne Pierrette Avrillion, *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Avrillion, première femme de chambre de l'Impératrice, sur la vie privée de Joséphine, sa famille, et sa cour* (Paris, 1969), 321–22; Jacques-Claude Beugnot, *Mémoires du comte Beugnot, ancien ministre, publiés par le comte Albert Beugnot, son petit-fils*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1866), I, 505.

5. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Captain Hely d'Oissel, "Campagne de 1809," journée du 19 avril 1809, Carton MR 899. For another account of the meeting and conversation between Lannes and Napoleon, see Édouard Gachot, *Napoléon en Allemagne* (Paris, 1913), 75.

6. See *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15112, 1st Bulletin of the Armée d'Allemagne, 24 April 1809, XVIII, 583–91; Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 150.

7. Reports of Morand and Saint-Sulpice, 20 April 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, II, 291. See also Gachot, *Allemagne*, 78–82. Lannes reported that he had taken 18,000 prisoners and twelve guns. The number of prisoners was clearly an exaggeration. Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, report on Abensberg, 21 April 1809, Carton C^2 88. Berthier claimed that "the entire Austrian army is in full retreat, and we have taken 12,000 prisoners." Berthier to Davout, 20 April 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, II, 295.

8. Gachot, *Allemagne*, 83–84.

9. Morand's report of 21 April 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, II, 323.

10. See *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15106, Napoleon to Lannes, 22 April 1809, XVIII, 580; Berthier to Lannes, 22 April 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, II, 333. The bulletin placed Archduke Charles's forces at 110,000. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15112, 1st Bulletin of the Armée d'Allemagne, 24 April 1809, XVIII, 587. For details on the battle of Eckmühl, see Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, report of Saint-Hilaire's division, 22 April 1809; Bulletin, 24 April 1809, Carton C^2 88; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15112, 1st Bulletin of the Armée d'Allemagne, 24 April 1809, XVIII, 583–91. Jean-Jacques Pelet,. *Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809 en Allemagne*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1825), II, 98. The casualty figures are from Pelet. The general wrote that Cervoni did not suffer at all, although his death certainly upset Lannes. Already knowing the end of the story when he wrote his account, Pelet said that Lannes also deserved to have "such a favor from the god of war." Marbot also wrote about the incident. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 120.

11. This situation was similar to the Prussian troops surrendering during the aftermath of Jena. Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, II, 96–97.

12. Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, II, 97–99 101–2; F. Loraine Petre, *Napoleon and the Archduke Charles* (New York, 1976), 187. Pelet said that the number of Austrian troops inside Ratisbon varied, even among Austrian sources. He cited figures ranging from 66,000 to less than 50,000. According to him, Archduke Charles thought they were sufficient to garrison Ratisbon, but not enough to take on the entire Armée d'Allemagne. Consequently, he left a garrison of less than 30,000 inside the city, and ordered the rest to follow him along the Danube's left bank. He also said if Archduke Charles had realized the French were in a position to attack so soon, he might have hurried a bit more.

13. Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, II, 363–64. For a description of Ratisbon and its defenses, see Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, II, 104; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 129.

14. Petre, *Napoleon and Archduke Charles*, 188–89. For details of the initial storming of Ratisbon, see Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, report of the 3rd Corps by General Gudin, 24 April 1809, Carton C^2 88; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, II, 105–9; Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 177–78; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 129–36; "Extrait du registre des mouvements de la 3e division du 3e corps, 23 April 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, II, 366.

15. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 133; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, II, 107–8.

16. Marbot's version of the altercation between Lannes and his staff naturally gave this literary aide a starring role. He told Lannes that "we would all be completely dishonored if we let you [lead the assault] and if you got the slightest wound before all your aides had been killed [in the attempt] first." Of Lannes's aides, Marbot and Charles LaBédoyère were first over the walls, followed by André de Viry and Serafino de Albuquerque. Pelet confirmed this part of the story, and a painting later provided evidence of their heroics. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 133–35; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, II, 108; Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 178. There is also a large painting of Lannes and the storming of Ratisbon hanging in the palace of Versailles, part of Napoleon's use of the arts as effective propaganda. The painting was not completed, however, until 1810.

17. Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, II, 340.

18. Ever colorful in his recollections, Marbot claimed that the Austrians were so scared that they could hardly pick up the barrels. In particular, the Austrian colonel looked as if he

might faint from fear. For the details of this entertaining story, see Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 139; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, II, 109; Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 237.

19. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 140–41; Colonel Blein to Bertrand, 24 April 1809; report of the 3rd Corps, 23 April 1809, both quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, II, 367–68; II, 365.

20. At Landshut the 2nd Corps consisted of General Jean-Victor Tharreau's division of Oudinot's grenadier corps, Saint-Hilaire's and General Joseph-Laurent Demont's infantry divisions, and General Édouard Colbert's light cavalry. Claparède's infantry division still belonged to Masséna, but it would eventually be detached and given to the 2nd Corps. Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, order of 24 April 1809, Carton C^2 88; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15129, Napoleon to Lannes, 27 April 1809, XVIII, 603.

21. Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, Lannes to Napoleon, 26 April 1809, Carton C^2 88; Berthier to Lannes, 30 April 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 85.

22. General Paulin, who at the time was a twenty-seven-year-old captain with the engineers, related this story of the bridge at Burghausen. Although Paulin mentioned Marbot's role in the incident, Marbot did not include it in his memoirs. General Jules-Antoine Paulin, *Les souvenirs du général Paulin* (Paris, 1895), 174–76.

23. Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, Berthier to Lannes, 2 May 1809, Carton C^2 89; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, II, 195–96; Berthier to Lannes, 2 May 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 117; Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 210.

24. Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, Lannes to Berthier, 3 May 1809, Carton C^2 89.

25. Ibid., Lannes to Napoleon, Berthier to Lannes, 4 May 1809.

26. Napoleon also told Lannes that no Austrians had been reported in the vicinity during the last twenty-four hours. "I imagine your corps' movement along the Enns persuaded them to withdraw," he wrote. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15159, Napoleon to Lannes, 5 May 1809, XVIII, 628. See also Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 212–13; Lannes to Napoleon, 5 May 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 162–63; Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, Berthier to Lannes, 9 May 1809, Carton C^2 89; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 149.

27. Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 216; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 166–67.

28. Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 254–55, 257–58. Archduke Charles's army numbered 121,700 on 10 May. This figure included his reserves. See also Moritz Edler von Angeli, *Erzherzog Karl von Österreich als Feldherr und Heeresorganisator*, 5 vols. (Vienna, 1896–97), IV, 292. Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 216–17; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 221–22. Saint-Mars was no stranger to carrying flags of truce into unfriendly cities. While he had emerged physically unscathed from his two forays into Saragossa, it is almost ironic that he was wounded in Vienna, where the anti-French sentiments of the citizens were scarcely noticeable, compared with the attitude of Saragossa's citizens. The hussars did not injure Saint-Mars's colleague, Colonel Guéhénuec. Probably because he was the marshal's brother-in-law, Lannes sent Guéhénuec to inform Napoleon that Vienna would be an open city in a matter of hours. The emperor sent the aide to Paris with the news; Guéhénuec therefore escaped the unpleasant events of the next two weeks. The 7th Bulletin said that Napoleon, with Lannes and his 2nd Corps, arrived at the gates of Vienna at nine in the morning of 10 May. The Bulletin went on to say that "certain disreputable men who were

the pawns of Archduke Maximilian" attacked Saint-Mars See *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15202, 7th Bulletin of the Armée d'Allemagne, 13 May 1809, XVIII, 650–54; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 168; Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 255; Schimmer, *Französischen Invasionen*, 80–81.

29. Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, General Albert's report, 12 May 1809, Carton C^2 89; Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 256; Pils, *Journal de marche*, 67–68; Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 256; Schimmer, *Französischen Invasionen*, 93.

30. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 170–72.

31. Baron Sébastien-Joseph Comeau de Charry, *Souvenirs des guerres d'Allemagne pendant la Révolution et l'Empire*, (Paris, 1900), 377–90.

32. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15246, 10th Bulletin of the Armée d'Allemagne, 23 May 1809, XIX, 40. For a good contemporary description of the Danube topography around Vienna, which was significantly different in 1809 than it is today, see Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 259–61. Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 221–23; Napoleon to Lannes, 17 May 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 303.

33. For details on the debacle at Nüßdorf, see Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, Lannes to Napoleon, 17 May 1809, Carton C^2 90; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 262; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 175–77; Saint-Hilaire's report of 13 May 1809, quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 263–65. Although everyone else provided details of the crossing, the fighting at Schwarze-Laken, and casualty figures, Marbot as usual had his eye on the comic. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15223, Napoleon to Lannes, 17 May 1809, XIX, 22.

34. For details of the topography at Kaiser-Ebersdorf, the nature of the bridges and their lengths, see *Mémorial du dépôt général de la guerre* (Paris, 1843), VIII, 356; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 259–60; Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 225; Maximilian Ritter von Hoen and Hugo Kerchnawe, *Krieg 1809*, Vol. IV, *Aspern* (Vienna, 1910), IV, 335. Bridge spans:

From Kaiser-Ebersdorf's right bank to Schneidergrund	240 meters [792 feet]
From Schneidergrund to Lobgrund	120 meters [396 feet]
From Lobgrund to Lobau Island	15 meters [50 feet]
From Lobau Island to the left bank	70 meters [231 feet]

The second span was subject to the strongest river currents.

35. The positions and orders of the Austrian army between 19–20 May were the 5th and 6th Corps, with 26,000 troops, at Stammersdorf opposite Vienna to prevent any attempts to cross at Nüßdorf and defend Bisamberg; the 1st Corps with 23,000 was in reserve behind the 5th and 6th Corps; the 2nd and 4th Corps and the reserves, more than 55,000 troops, were at the archduke's headquarters at Groß-Enzersdorf. These would constitute the offensive directed against Lobau Island. Von Hoen and Kerchnawe, *Krieg 1809*, IV, 365–68. This time, Pelet claimed the archduke had superiority in artillery. Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 282–83.

36. Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, Berthier to Lannes, 19 May 1809, Carton C^2 90. For the final composition of the 2nd Corps, which included the infantry divisions of Saint-Hilaire, Claparède, and Demont, and Tharreau's grenadier division, see Ibid., Ordres de bataille des armées en campagne, 1792–1815, II Corps, 21 May 1809, Carton X^P 3. See also Molitor to Masséna, 20 May 1809, quoted in Saski,

Campagne de 1809, III, 336–37; Von Hoen and Kerchnawe, *Krieg 1809*, IV, 377. Although Pelet commented on the "basic ignorance" of the French reconnaissance, he absolved Masséna from such blindness. He claimed that Masséna's accuracy resulted from the fact that he had a lengthy experience of high command. None of the sources commented on possible reasons for Lannes's misinformation, or why the cavalry patrols failed to see anything significant. See Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 294, n. 1; Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 232–33. Austrian sources claimed that the archduke had given orders for his forces to advance during the predawn hours to their positions for the next day's engagement. These orders were supposed to explain why Masséna did not see many campfires. However, Masséna obviously saw enough to convince him of the archduke's presence. See Von Hoen and Kerchnawe, *Krieg 1809*, IV, 393.

37. Constant, *Mémoires*, 359–60.

38. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 180; Las Cases, *Memoirs*, I, 201; II, 395.

39. From the bridge to Aspern on the left, the distance was approximately 1.3 miles; to Essling it was 1.75 miles; and the distance between Aspern and Essling was a little over a mile. Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 286–85; Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 231–32, 234–38; Von Hoen and Kerchnawe, *Krieg 1809*, III, 399–400.

40. C. L. Cadet de Gassicourt, *Voyage en Autriche, en Moravie et en Bavière* (Paris, 1818), 113–14.

41. Saski said that Boudet was completely on his own during 21 May. The only reinforcements he received that day were Lannes and his aides-de-camp. Saski also wrote that the marshal and his staff personally fought as hard as Boudet's infantry did on the 21st. Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 346.

42. Archduke Charles had divided his forces into five columns, each with a specific objective. Exactly how many of the Armée d'Allemagne the archduke meant to allow to cross to the left bank, or how far out onto the plain he would let the enemy advance before attacking them was not clear, according to both Austrian and French sources. Obviously, Archduke Charles's plans depended on the circumstances at any given point during the battle. See Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 344; Von Hoen and Kerchnawe, *Krieg 1809*, IV, 400. Pelet said that Rosenberg, leading Archduke Charles's fifth column, had taken his time in occupying Groß-Enzersdorf. That village was deserted, but Rosenberg used it as his base to attack Essling. Pelet commented that Lannes would "resist [the enemy] past all reasonable expectations," in spite of being outnumbered from the very beginning. Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 298–99. Masséna said that Napoleon had only 24,000 infantry and less than 5,000 cavalry confronting more than 80,000 Austrians. This small force was also "deprived of any ammunition reserves, and forced to fight without hope of retreat, cut off by a river rising minute by minute and impossible to ford." Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 239, 241–42, 245–46. See also Von Hoen and Kerchnawe, *Krieg 1809*, IV, 40; Saski, *Campagne de 1809* III, 303–04; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 187; "Journal historique des opérations militaires de la division de cavalerie légère du général Marulaz," quoted in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 346.

43. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 187–92.

44. Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 305.

45. Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 279. Details for the events occurring during the first hours of 22 May are found in Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 348–53, and Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*,

III, 310–25. Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 246–47; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Tranchant de Laverne, "Campagne de 1809," 189, Carton MR 664.

46. One participant said that both sides were motivated by "honor, love of glory, and patriotism." The French were fighting under the eyes of the emperor, however, and they were "confident that they were invincible." Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Tranchant de Laverne, "Campagne de 1809," 189–90, Carton MR 664.

47. Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 247–49. Ironically, before the first day of the battle, Napoleon had promised that Saint-Hilaire would be the next to receive a marshal's batôn. Saint-Hilaire's wound was serious enough that the doctors used their standard remedy for such casualties of war—they amputated his foot. The theory behind this military medical practice was to prevent gangrene. In Saint-Hilaire's case, it failed, and the general died two weeks later. Lejeune spent most of his time on 22 May between Lobau Island and the mainland where the battle was being fought. He observed the field hospitals that day, and wrote of Larrey and the rest of the extremely busy doctors that "their very mercy made them seem recklessly cruel." Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 282; Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Tranchant de Laverne, "Campagne de 1809, 190, Carton MR 664.

48. Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 282; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 320–21.

49. Service historique, Mémoires reconnaissances, Tranchant de Laverne, "Campagne de 1809," 191–92, Carton MR 664; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 322; 324–25; Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 252.

50. Saski, *Campagne de 1809*, III, 354; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 327.

51. According to the poetic Pelet, "Lannes seemed invincible, even though he was surrounded by deadly enemy fire." Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 327–29.

52. Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 254–55; *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15242, Berthier to Davout, 22 May 1809, XIX, 37.

53. Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 289–90.

54. Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, Archduke Charles to Francis II, 23 May 1809, Carton C^2 90. The Austrian national sentiment concurred with the archduke's view of the battle of Aspern, as German-speaking historians called it. Probably several of the French corps commanders who fought there would also agree with Charles. An entire body of literature arose from the battle, and indeed from the total Austrian resistance to the French presence in 1809. This literature included poems praising the archduke, the Austrian Landwehr, Andeas Hofer and the Tyroleans, and anyone else who opposed Napoleon. The resulting collection of contemporary literary outpourings was assembled under the general title of *Achtzehnhundertneun: Das Kriegsjahr*. A later Austrian author, Karl Bleibtreu, writing for the centennial of Aspern, produced a historical novel about the battle that managed to be complimentary of the French, especially Lannes, while it extolled the Austrian cause. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, "Œuvres de Napoléon à Sainte-Hélène," XXXI, 448. In his explanation of what went both wrong and right at Aspern-Essling, Napoleon remarked that Lannes's attack against the Austrian center on 22 May was perfectly executed. He commented that Lannes "was the best at maneuvering troops in the whole army." Like so many other participants who left their impressions behind for posterity, Lejeune commented on the battle. He wrote that "the one aim in this two-day battle was to end the war and obtain a [lasting] peace. We were not successful, but no real victory could have been more glorious for our army than the long-sustained, unflinching resistance that intimidated a force four times larger than our own and

that had every means at its disposal for completely crushing us, [but] was at the end prevented from interfering with our retreat." Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 268. Although Archduke Charles had an army of more than 100,000 present, several divisions remained in reserve and never fought. Nevertheless, his casualties were high for those who did fight during the two days. The French had no more than 22,000 troops on the left bank on 21 May, and less than 40,000 on the 22nd. Their casualties represented, therefore, a much higher percentage of the forces actually engaged. See Service historique, Correspondance: Armée d'Allemagne, report of Espagne's division, 21 May 1809; II Corps, Gautier's report, 22 May 1809, Carton C^2 90; Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 357–58; Von Hoen and Kerchnawe, *Krieg 1809*, IV, 700; 785–86.

55. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 201–2.

56. Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 279; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 202.

57. Doctor Yvan believed that Lannes was strong enough to recover without such drastic measures. He told Marbot that amputation, if done under the present unhealthy conditions found in this particular field hospital, "almost always sent the wounded to their graves." Marbot said the doctors held a "secret consultation," but he was not there at the time, and got his information later from Yvan. Larrey wrote that although Lannes was indeed conscious, he did not think the marshal really understood the gravity of his situation. See Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 279–80; Marbot, *Mémoires*, III, 202. Larrey's feelings were more pronounced in a letter to his wife, written on 1 June, when he expressed how he felt about the loss of his friend, and also provided his wife with more medical details than she probably wanted to read. Wellcome Institute, London, MSS Collection, MS. 5316/62, No. 16, 1 June 1809.

58. The witnesses who recorded this interview included Pelet, Marbot, Lejeune, and Montesquieu-Fézensac. They all agreed on two points: Napoleon was very upset and demonstrative in his affection toward Lannes; and the marshal, in spite of shock from his wound and the subsequent amputation, attempted to reassure the emperor he would eventually resume his military service. See Pelet, *Mémoires de 1809*, III, 333–36; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 203; Lejeune, *Memoirs*, I, 291–92; Montesquieu-Fézensac, *Souvenirs*, 168.

59. Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 204; Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 281. See also Masséna, *Mémoires*, VI, 260.

60. Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 282; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 204; Gassicourt, *Voyage en Autriche*, 126. The brewer's house in Kaiser-Ebersdorf was demolished in 1987. A new house in a similar style was rebuilt on the same site in 1992, using some of the original materials. Although it is a private residence, it still has a plaque on the front of it commemorating Lannes's death. Somewhat charitable toward the enemy they had defeated, and to Lannes in particular, the Austrians also named Essling's main western street in the marshal's honor.

61. Pierre de Berthezène, *Souvenirs militaires de la République et de l'Empire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1855), I, 236, Constant, *Mémoires intimes*, 361.

62. Constant, de Gassicourt, *Voyage en Autriche*, 127.

63. Larrey's only remedy for the fever was quinine, and that did not help at all. Larrey, *Mémoires*, III, 283–84; Marbot, *Mémoires*, II, 213.

64. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 15253, Napoleon to Fouché, 25 May 1809, XIX, 49–50; No. 15281, Napoleon to Cambacérès, 31 May 1809, XIX, 71. According to Marbot, Lannes died about 5:45 a.m. Marbot, *Mémoires*, III, 284; Constant, *Mémoires*

intimes, 361. The official notice of death also gave the time as 5:45 a.m., and was signed by Yvan, Lanfranc, and Generals Mathieu Dumas and Etienne d'Hastrel. Service historique, dossier du maréchal Lannes, Carton MF^2 10.

65. Billon, *Souvenirs*, 73; Henri Vigier, *Davout, maréchal d'Empire, duc d'Auerstaedt, prince d'Eckmühl*, 2nd. ed, 2 vols. (Paris, 1898), II 32; Albert Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre Ier*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1918), II 93; Lannes, *Le maréchal Lannes*, 192–93, 229.

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Conclusion: Le Chevalier sans peur et sans reproche

For a long time, [Lannes] was just a fighting man,
but afterwards he became an officer of the first rank.
—Napoleon to Las Cases

There is something to be said for dying young, at the height of one's career, and in the midst of glory. Under these circumstances, the whole nation can mourn the hero's death, as the French nation certainly did in 1810. The early loss of such a prominent and talented commander as Lannes also gives rise to speculation—most of it merely academic—that had he survived, his military abilities at Jena, Friedland, and Essling, for instance, might have made a difference at Leipzig and Waterloo. Napoleon commented at Saint-Helena on what he thought Lannes would have done during the 1814 campaign, the period after the abdication, the Hundred Days, and especially at Waterloo. "[Although] I have learned not to count on anything, I cannot imagine that [Lannes] would deviate from the path of duty and honor. Besides, it is difficult to imagine that he could have lived [much longer than he did]. With all of his bravery, he would unquestionably have been killed in some of the last battles, or at least sufficiently wounded to keep him out [of action] for some time. If he had remained untouched, he was certainly a man capable of changing the whole course of events by his own presence and influence."[1]

The reality of the marshal's life is far more interesting than suppositions. Lannes's career, cut tragically short, provides more than enough material for a picaresque adventure. Dying from wounds inflicted by the enemy, instead of in bed at an advanced age, adds a final, dramatic epitaph. Of course Napoleon added to the drama, postmortem, as it were. Too busy planning how best to get back at Archduke Charles, then settling the score with Francis II with the Treaty of Schönbrunn and shopping for a young, fertile wife, he put his plans for his dead friend on hold. He put the body on hold as well, interring it temporarily in the crypts of the cathedral at

Strasbourg, until a suitably grand entrance into France could take place.

The state funeral, beginning with a procession beginning in Strasbourg and stopping at every crossroads between there and Paris, would end with a Requiem Mass on 6 July 1810 in the Soldier's Church at Les Invalides. As pure pageantry this was one of Napoleon's finer efforts. It was also self-serving—the emperor chose the date to commemorate his victory at Wagram, a battle in which Lannes had no part, obviously. The details of the state funeral are included in Lannes's dossier. These details, ranging from the names and stipends of the orchestra and chorus who performed Mozart's *Requiem* to Duroc's plans for crowd-control, take up more space in the marshal's dossier than all the facts of his lengthy and illustrious military career. As part of Napoleon's media management, *Le Moniteur* published a full account of the funeral, in four closely printed pages, on 14 July. The most bizarre aspect of the entire circus was the fact that Napoleon did not attend. He excused his absence by claiming the ceremonies would upset his Austrian wife, Marie-Louise, because it was her brother's army, after all, that had made the whole affair necessary in the first place.

One thing is probably true: Lannes would have hated his own funeral. Too much fuss, in his opinion, with too many dignitaries in silly costumes, entirely too many clergy, and a requiem by a dead Austrian composer who probably could not have written a decent march if his life depended on it. He would also resent being stashed away in the Panthéon crypts: too dark and cold, and surrounded by too many illustrious dead Frenchmen he knew—or cared—nothing about. At least Lannes is at a safe distance from Voltaire and Rousseau. Instead his tomb is between Lazare Carnot, a person with whom he would have had much in common, and Victor Hugo, whose Bonapartist sympathies he could appreciate. It might be amusing to speculate what these three talk about when the tourists have gone home.

Fortunately, Lannes never had to see the depths—in his opinion, of course—to which his family sunk after his death. The lovely, chaste Louise spent the last years of the First Empire as Marie-Louise's lady-of-honor, a role she performed with everything *but* honor. Instrumental in alienating the empress from Napoleon, she exerted considerable control over this young woman, who considered her a dear friend. Worse, when the allied army entered Paris in 1814, Louise offered her house on the rue de Varenne to Arthur Wellesley to use as his headquarters. Before the ink was dry on Napoleon's abdication decree, she had become a Bourbon supporter. Lannes's eldest son, Napoléon-Auguste, who inherited the title, though his mother controlled the money with a tight fist for years, married an English girl. So did another one of his brothers. A third brother married the daughter of an émigré. Clearly the family was going to the dogs—in this case, to the Bourbons, the English, and the émigrés, the three groups of people Lannes had hated the most. The marshal certainly deserved better.

How should the significance of Lannes's place in the Napoleonic era be evaluated? There are questions to answer about his abilities first as a soldier and then as a commander, and an assessment of his personality and those traits, uncommon as well as unconventional, that made the emperor promote, reward, and befriend him. In an era full of individual prima donnas, not the least of which was

Napoleon, why does Lannes matter, particularly since he never participated in the Peninsular Wars except for a brief time, did not go to Russia, and was not at Waterloo? Because many historians apparently believe that these three Napoleonic campaigns are so crucial and interesting for a variety of reasons, they have chosen to concentrate on those marshals who participated in them. They have overlooked Lannes until recently, and neglected to consider the role he played when the Napoleonic empire was at its zenith.

Lannes's early career was typical of the changes inaugurated by the French Revolution. With the Ancien régime's emphasis on birth and wealth as criteria for military promotions, Lannes would have gone nowhere. The Revolution and Napoleon recognized the value of an individual's talents and merit, and Lannes had those qualities from the beginning. Consistent personal bravery in the campaigns of 1792–94 earned him promotions and praise. In 1796 he attracted Bonaparte's attention, and that notice had a significant impact on the rest of his military career.

Although the revolutionary armies had many courageous officers and men, the qualities that Lannes demonstrated during those early years and which Bonaparte learned to value, were a talent for command, ability to execute orders perfectly—most of the time, battlefield initiative, and a strong personal loyalty toward his commander-in-chief. As a result, Bonaparte entrusted Lannes with a variety of functions, including those that became his military trademark: advance-guard command, independent missions to deal with generally unpleasant and hazardous "insurgents," and diplomatic assignments where force was more important than finesse. Because of his abilities and his unquestionable loyalty, Lannes followed Bonaparte—to Egypt, to 18 Brumaire, and then to Marengo.

Lannes's three-year "Portuguese interlude" demonstrated his peculiar talent for extracting favorable diplomatic concessions in the midst of an unfamiliar and hostile milieu. It also showed his ability to win the respect and friendship of some of the most unlikely people. He left Portugal having earned the friendship of the prince regent, Dom João. In 1806 at Weimar, he charmed the German poet, Goethe, and two years later at Erfurt, he won the respect of Alexander I. However, what reigning princes and famous literary figures saw in Lannes was no more and no less than what they got from him: unaffected honesty, plain, unrefined speech, unpretentiousness, and Gascon charm.

As an integral part of Napoleon's Grande Armée, Lannes served with distinction in the Austerlitz campaign, combining steadiness in command with occasional bits of very successful chicanery. His actions at Jena were certainly vital for Napoleon's success there, and his unrelenting, exhausting pursuit of the Prussians in the wake of Murat's cavalry was nearly legendary. Had Lannes not been so successful at Friedland for eleven hours against four-to-one odds, the rest of the Grande Armée, arriving with Napoleon at noon, would definitely not have had such a resounding victory to celebrate at Tilsit. Although the Peninsula has been considered a veritable "graveyard of marshals' reputations," Lannes was successful in Spain. He defeated Castaños's army at Tudela and forced Saragossa to capitulate in less than six weeks, a feat that other marshals and generals had failed to achieve in two separate attempts. During the Danube campaign of 1809, Lannes did everything right, from storming

Ratisbon to building bridges. At Essling, outnumbered, without reinforcements and with his ammunition running out, he held a key defensive position for two days, attacked the enemy when he was ordered to do so, and retreated in perfect order when that eventually became necessary. He finally lost his life, not during the heat of battle but ironically afterward, when the firing had virtually ceased, because he wanted to be alone to mourn the loss of a friend.

Lannes was considered to be one of Napoleon's closest friends, the only one who never abandoned the familiarity of the early years of the first Italian Campaign, and continued to *tutoyer* the emperor when no one else dared to do so. On many occasions, however, Lannes showed little judgment in what he said to the emperor, and behaved in a rather childish manner whenever he believed his imperial friend had slighted him. Almost all of his contemporaries considered Lannes to be without parallel in courage, resourcefulness, initiative, and ability to motivate his troops. Several of his colleagues were equally aware of Lannes's volatile Gascon temper and his tendency to harbor long-standing grudges against some of his fellow marshals. His divisional generals were very loyal to him, and admired his ability to command, his willingness to share the hardships of campaign with them, and his continual concern for their well-being and that of their troops. Lannes's subordinates were also aware that the marshal detested incompetence, and, until the last year of his life, anyone of any rank who failed to perform as he expected was often subjected to very irate, public, and probably embarrassing reprimands. Lannes participated in every one of Napoleon's greatest campaigns, and made a significant contribution to all of them. Although Napoleon could count on Lannes to execute his orders perfectly and use initiative when it was called for, he also recognized that the marshal sometimes allowed his impetuosity and desire to out-perform other marshals to cloud his judgment. The emperor later recalled that "[Lannes] was definitely one of the men on whom I could rely implicitly. It is also true that because of his impetuosity, sometimes he had a few hasty words to say to me, but [I believe that] he would probably have struck anybody who overheard him [and was foolish enough to comment on his conversation with me]."[2]

The emperor also understood that his sometimes difficult but eminently capable corps commander died just as he was realizing his true military potential, and was kind—and accurate—enough to say so. If Lannes had survived to serve Napoleon during the later campaigns, there is little doubt that he would have played a significant role. If he had managed to stay out of harm's way during those last campaigns, which even Napoleon thought was not likely to happen, given the Gascon marshal's personal courage, it is possible that his military abilities might have prolonged the life of the First Empire. In spite of the wealth of supremely interesting and generally entertaining facts about Lannes's career, it is still tempting to speculate about "what might have been." Napoleon himself certainly thought how different—and probably better—things might have been for him had his friend and subordinate lived several years longer.

NOTES

1. Las Cases, *Memoirs*, I, 337–38.
2. Ibid., II, 395–96.

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About the Author

MARGARET SCOTT CHRISAWN is adjunct Professor of History at Tallahassee Community College and a member of the senior management with the Florida Department of Corrections. She belongs to the Institute of Napoleon and the French Revolution at Florida State University. She is a frequent contributor to the annual Consortium on Revolutionary Europe as presenter, panel chair, and commentator.

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